

Federal Government's cybersecurity and adopting modern technology should be a top priority of Congress.

I look forward to working together on issues like this that are in the best interest of the Nation. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of H.R. 21, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 21.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET JUSTIFICATION TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2021

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 22) to amend the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to require the budget justifications and appropriation requests of agencies be made publicly available.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 22

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act of 2021".

SEC. 2. PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF BUDGET JUSTIFICATIONS AND APPROPRIATION REQUESTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3 of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-282; 31 U.S.C. 6101 note) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 3. FULL DISCLOSURE OF FEDERAL FUNDS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—Not less frequently than monthly when practicable, and in any event not less frequently than quarterly, the Secretary (in consultation with the Director and, with respect to information described in subsection (b)(2), the head of the applicable agency) shall ensure that updated information with respect to the information described in subsection (b) is posted on the website established under section 2.

"(b) INFORMATION TO BE POSTED.—

"(1) FUNDS.—For any funds made available to or expended by a Federal agency or component of a Federal agency, the information to be posted shall include—

"(A) for each appropriations account, including an expired or unexpired appropriations account, the amount—

"(i) of budget authority appropriated;

"(ii) that is obligated;

"(iii) of unobligated balances; and

"(iv) of any other budgetary resources;

"(B) from which accounts and in what amount—

"(i) appropriations are obligated for each program activity; and

"(ii) outlays are made for each program activity;

"(C) from which accounts and in what amount—

"(i) appropriations are obligated for each object class; and

"(ii) outlays are made for each object class; and

"(D) for each program activity, the amount—

"(i) obligated for each object class; and

"(ii) of outlays made for each object class.

"(2) BUDGET JUSTIFICATIONS.—

"(A) DEFINITION.—In this paragraph, the term 'budget justification materials' means the annual budget justification materials of an agency that are submitted, in conjunction with the budget of the United States Government submitted under section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, but does not include budget justification materials that are classified.

"(B) INFORMATION.—The information to be posted shall include any budget justification materials—

"(i) for the second fiscal year beginning after the date of enactment of this paragraph, and each fiscal year thereafter; and

"(ii) to the extent practicable, that were released for any fiscal year before the date of enactment of this paragraph.

"(C) FORMAT.—Budget justification materials shall be posted under subparagraph (B)—

"(i) as an open Government data asset (as defined under section 3502 of title 44, United States Code);

"(ii) in a manner that enables users to download individual reports, download all reports in bulk, and download in bulk the results of a search, to the extent practicable; and

"(iii) in a structured data format, to the extent practicable.

"(D) DEADLINE.—The budget justification materials required to be posted under subparagraph (B)(i) shall be posted not later than 2 weeks after the date on which the budget justification materials are first submitted to Congress.

"(E) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to authorize an agency to destroy any budget justification materials relating to a fiscal year before the fiscal year described in subparagraph (B)(i)."

(b) INFORMATION REGARDING AGENCY BUDGET JUSTIFICATIONS.—Section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(1)(I) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall make publicly available on a website, and continuously update, a tabular list for each fiscal year of each agency that submits budget justification materials, which shall include—

"(A) the name of the agency;

"(B) a unique identifier that identifies the agency;

"(C) to the extent practicable, the date on which the budget justification materials of the agency are first submitted to Congress;

"(D) the date on which the budget justification materials of the agency are posted online under section 3 of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006;

"(E) the uniform resource locator where the budget justification materials are published on the website of the agency; and

"(F) a single data set that contains the information described in subparagraphs (A) through (E) with respect to the agency for all fiscal years for which budget justifications of the agency are made available under section 3 of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 in a structured data format.

"(2)(A) Each agency that submits budget justification materials shall make the materials available on the website of the agency, in accordance with the policies established by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget under subparagraph (B).

"(B) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury, shall establish policies for agencies relating to making available materials under subparagraph (A), which shall include guidelines for making budget justification materials available in a format aligned with the requirements of section 3(b)(2)(C) of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 and using a uniform resource locator that is in a consistent format across agencies and is descriptive, memorable, and pronounceable, such as the format of 'agencyname.gov/budget'.

"(C) If the Director of the Office of Management and Budget maintains a public website that contains the budget of the United States Government submitted under subsection (a) and any related materials, such website shall also contain a link to the tabular list required under paragraph (1).

"(3) In this subsection, the term 'budget justification materials' has the meaning given that term in section 3 of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006."

SEC. 3. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY) and the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure before us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us, the Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act, is a commonsense, good-government measure every Member should support.

It would require the congressional budget justification documents that agencies prepare for congressional committees to be posted online in a centralized, searchable database. This would make these detailed, plain-language explanations of how agencies plan to spend taxpayer dollars more accessible to the public.

I thank Representative MIKE QUIGLEY for his work on this bill. He has a long

history as a strong advocate of transparency in the operations of the Federal Government.

This bill builds on the work of the committee to improve government transparency by allowing the public to more easily learn how Federal agencies spend their taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 22, the Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act.

The Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act is a long-overdue reform that would ensure Congress and the Nation's taxpayers can understand the full scope and context of the annual Federal budget.

I thank my colleagues, Congressman MIKE QUIGLEY and Ranking Member JAMES COMER, for working together on this important bipartisan legislation.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 22 will truly open up the executive branch annual budget request and provide needed transparency of each agency's detailed budget justifications. The American public and each of their congressional Representatives deserve full access to the annual agency plans to spend their hard-earned tax dollars.

This past year alone, the Federal Government spent more than \$6.5 trillion. Public spending transparency resources, like USAspending.gov, are currently helping the public track ongoing agency spending activity. However, the annual congressional budget justifications provide detailed and plain language explanations of how each Federal agency plans to spend congressional appropriations.

Currently, these valuable budget documents are sent directly to congressional appropriators and are then posted across hundreds of disconnected agency web pages. This makes them extremely hard to track down.

H.R. 22 simply requires the budget justifications of every agency to be made publicly available on a single website. To do this, the bill requires the Office of Management and Budget to issue a full listing of agency budget justifications and the individual agency web pages where they are posted. This will assure the public that they have access to the complete publication of these authoritative budget resources.

The bill also requires the U.S. Treasury Department to centrally publish all the materials on USAspending.gov as open data.

As established in 2014 by the DATA Act, USAspending.gov is quickly becoming the primary public resource for the public to track how the government is using their tax dollars. Adding congressional budget justifications to USAspending.gov will provide even better context to agency spending activity.

Thanks to another House Committee on Oversight and Reform-produced law,

the 2018 Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act, congressional budget justifications also now list unimplemented inspector general audit and GAO report recommendations. This means H.R. 22 will also help Congress and the public annually track open IG and GAO oversight recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY). I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY).

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise in support of my Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act, H.R. 22.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will put on his mask.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, it is a bipartisan bill that addresses the lack of transparency around the documents that explain why executive agencies are requesting funds from Congress. These justifications shed light on the work and priorities of the Federal Government far more effectively than high-level spending figures.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018 and 2019, Congress encouraged OMB to publish all executive branch congressional budget justification materials on a centralized web portal. However, there is no legal requirement for congressional budget justifications to be posted on a centralized portal or on agency websites.

For these reasons, agencies are inconsistent in posting congressional budget justifications online, making them difficult to access because they are either not publicly available or are scattered across the internet.

Mr. Speaker, my bill will strengthen Federal Government transparency by requiring Federal agencies to publish their annual budget justifications online in a central location. This will better allow oversight of our government and allow the American people to verify that their taxpayer dollars are being used wisely to invest in their communities.

All Illinoisans and Americans should get the transparency they deserve on government spending, and the bill does just that.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize Chairwoman MALONEY and Ranking Member COMER for their unwavering support for this bill and for prioritizing this legislation early on in the 117th Congress. I thank them again for their leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this common-sense transparency legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to

the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairwoman for her leadership and continued respect for the oversight of this body. And I particularly thank the gentleman from Illinois and his cosponsors for this very astute legislation.

I join with my bipartisan colleagues to indicate that the transparency of funding by way of the budget process is absolutely crucial to be able to be guided by what is right, as well, to ensure that we, the Congress, have a knowledge of the importance of the funding process, the importance of the programs that are used for taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, let me just take a microcosm of what I believe will be an important aspect of this. Why don't I take COVID-19 as an example?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have been hearing from all over the Nation that the Federal Government needs to be in charge. The agency that I think would be most effective as a national coordinator of vaccine transport and delivery is FEMA.

For safe and effective supply chain transport, delivery, and site use of vaccines, FEMA has the ability to tell other agencies what to do or to be able to be part of the success of the distribution of these vaccines. They have broad stakeholder engagement. FEMA has personnel all over the Nation, and they are not in the business of picking business winners or losers. And implementing CDC COVID-19 vaccine recommendations, they know how to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I say thank you to all the private-sector volunteers, all the pharmacies located in grocery stores and well-known chains, but that is not working. It is not going to work.

This particular legislation would let us know the budget plan of an agency, like FEMA, which really looms large in our lives because whether you have experienced a fire in California, or whether or not you have experienced Hurricane Harvey in Texas, or whether or not you have experienced tornadoes, FEMA has been on the ground. They know how to put large efforts together. They can lead the effort for vaccine delivery so that we don't have these kinds of episodes.

"One American dies from COVID-19 every 33 seconds." Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD an article.

[From CNN, Jan. 5, 2021]

ONE AMERICAN DIES FROM COVID-19 EVERY 33 SECONDS AS THE VACCINE ROLLOUT HITS SNAGS

(By Holly Yan and Madeline Holcombe)

While hopes of vaccinating 20 million people by New Year's Day sputtered out, the US now faces staggering new challenges in the fight against Covid-19.

Over the past week, the US has averaged 2,637 coronavirus deaths every day, according to Johns Hopkins University.

That's an average of one Covid-19 death every 33 seconds.

December was the deadliest month yet of this pandemic, with 77,572 lives lost. And

deaths are likely to accelerate as new infections and hospitalizations rise.

On Monday, more people were hospitalized with Covid-19 than any other day in this pandemic—128,210, according to the Covid Tracking Project.

The US averaged 213,437 new infections every day over the past week, largely fueled by holiday gatherings, health experts say.

But while daily new infections soared 16% over the past week, testing has actually decreased 11.65% over the past week, according to the Covid Tracking Project.

Doctors worry this rampant spread of Covid-19 will push more hospitals beyond capacity and lead to more deaths as the vaccine rollout staggers along.

THE POSSIBILITY OF GIVING HALF-DOSES OF A VACCINE

About 15.4 million vaccine doses have been distributed in the US, but only 4.5 million people have received their first doses, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Monday.

That's far behind what officials had hoped for by now. And it means herd immunity is still many months away.

"We agree that there is a lag. We'll work with the states," said Moncef Slaoui, chief scientific adviser of the federal Operation Warp Speed vaccination effort.

To help expedite vaccinations, the US might start giving half-doses of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine to people age 18 to 55, which could make the vaccine available to twice as many people in that age group, Slaoui said.

Slaoui said Sunday the US Food and Drug Administration would meet this week to consider the idea.

But the FDA commissioner and its vaccine division chief said in a joint statement that people need to get two full doses instead of two half-doses.

"At this time, suggesting changes to the FDA-authorized dosing or schedules of these vaccines is premature and not rooted solidly in the available evidence," said FDA Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn and Dr. Peter Marks, who heads the agency's vaccine division. "Without appropriate data supporting such changes in vaccine administration, we run a significant risk of placing public health at risk, undermining the historic vaccination efforts to protect the population from Covid-19."

It's understandable that people may want to stretch the vaccine supply, they said. But it's not advisable.

"If people do not truly know how protective a vaccine is, there is the potential for harm because they may assume that they are fully protected when they are not, and accordingly, alter their behavior to take unnecessary risks," they said.

The two 100-microgram Moderna vaccine doses are intended to be spaced 28 days apart.

CNN has reached out to Moderna for comment.

Dr. Jonathan Reiner, a professor of medicine at George Washington University, said he does not agree with the idea of half-doses.

"We have about 13 million doses that have been shipped out to the states, and only barely 4 million doses that have gone into arms. So the bottleneck is not the lack of availability of vaccine. The bottleneck is actually the logistics of vaccinating people in this country."

It's difficult enough to get some patients on board with getting a vaccine, he said. Going against the recommended dosing could hurt patients' confidence.

"When I see people in clinic, I talk about the vaccine every single day. I'm trying to reduce vaccine hesitancy," Reiner said Monday.

"And the strongest weapon I have is the data. I can tell people that these two vaccines have been studied in 70,000 people—more than 70,000 people—in this two-dose strategy. And when given that way, they're both 95% effective, and basically no one gets critically ill if you get this vaccine. . . . Once you break from the data, I can no longer say that."

STUDY SAYS HOLDING BACK FEWER DOSES COULD CUT CASES BY 29%

Right now, the federal government is allocating about half of the vaccines being produced. The other half is held in reserve to be used as a second dose or as replacements in cases where doses are unusable.

But by reducing the amount withheld to 10% for the first three weeks and supplying a steady dose of 6 million doses per week, the US could avoid up to 29% more coronavirus cases over eight weeks, a study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found.

"We find that under most plausible scenarios, a more balanced approach that withholds fewer doses during early distribution in order to vaccinate more people as soon as possible could substantially increase the benefits of vaccines, while enabling most recipients to receive second doses on schedule," write the study's authors, who were supported by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The researchers modeled several scenarios, with variables including vaccine supply, protection provided by the first dose, and waning efficacy of a first dose if a second dose is delayed.

AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE DIES OF COVID-19

In California, health care workers are treating an unprecedented number of Covid-19 patients. Sometimes, those patients are colleagues.

At Kaiser Permanente San Jose Medical Center, 44 emergency department employees tested positive for Covid-19 between December 27 and January 1, said Irene Chavez, senior vice president and area manager.

On Monday, the hospital said one employee who was working on Christmas has died of Covid-19.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with those affected by this terrible loss," the hospital said in a statement. "We are providing support to our employees during this difficult time," according to a statement from the hospital.

Over the weekend, Chavez said the medical center is investigating whether an inflatable, air-powered costume may have played a role in the spread.

"A staff member did appear briefly in the emergency department on December 25th wearing an air-powered costume," she said.

"Any exposure, if it occurred, would have been completely innocent, and quite accidental, as the individual had no Covid symptoms and only sought to lift the spirits of those around them during what is a very stressful time."

Chavez said air-powered costumes will no longer be allowed at the facility.

"If anything, this should serve as a very real reminder that the virus is widespread, and often without symptoms, and we must all be vigilant," she said.

'A ROUGH START TO 2021'

On Sunday, five states reported their highest number of new infections ever in one day—Arizona, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Washington.

And over the past week, at least five states have average test positivity rates higher than 40%—meaning more than 40% of people who take a Covid-19 test get a positive result.

Those states include Idaho (57%), Alabama (46.7%), Iowa (44.6%), Pennsylvania (44%) and South Dakota (43.8%). For perspective, the WHO has recommended governments not reopen until the test positivity rates stays at or below 5% for 14 days.

In South Carolina, which had a 29.6% test positivity rate Sunday, officials in four counties said their hospitals were at 100% capacity, according to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

"We're in for a bit of a rough start to 2021," said Maria Van Kerkhove, the World Health Organization's technical lead for Covid-19 response.

But it's possible daily life in the US could be closer to normal by the summer or fall, she said. Other countries are already well on their way—thanks to quarantining, testing, isolation and contact tracing.

"We've seen countries bring this virus to its knees, without vaccination," Van Kerkhove said. "We have the tools at hand right now to actually bring this virus under control."

Ms. JACKSON LEE. The city of Houston has done a phenomenal job by trying to open up these centers, but guess what? They are looking for their next delivery. We should not be looking for the next delivery. The delivery should be organized, logistically. It should be stored on the ground.

"Houston, have you finished your utilization? Are you ready for your next?"

"L.A., have you finished your utilization? Are you ready for your next?"

That is not happening.

"COVID vaccine rollout is going about as well as you'd feared." Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD that article, along with an article regarding the opening of Houston's first public COVID-19 vaccine location.

COVID VACCINE ROLLOUT IS GOING ABOUT AS WELL AS YOU'D FEARED

Texans are beginning the new year the same way we spent much of the last one: straggling through a devastating pandemic with a patchy public health infrastructure, a confusing mishmash of rules and procedures, and an ominous absence of effective statewide leadership.

We have a COVID-19 vaccine now: that's the good news. Two of them, actually, one by Pfizer and the other by Moderna, both developed as part of the federal Operation Warp Speed and approved by the Federal Drug Administration for emergency use last month.

We knew that distributing hundreds of millions of vaccines would be a challenge. Each requires two doses and careful handling—including ultra-cold storage for the Pfizer vaccine. Each is being distributed to a population that includes potential recipients skeptical of vaccines in general, and the COVID vaccine in particular.

But we had several months to figure this out. And it's quickly become painfully clear that we didn't.

In Phase 1A of the plan put forward by the Texas Department of State Health Services, the first doses of the vaccine were distributed to front-line health care workers and residents of long-term care facilities, beginning last month. On Tuesday, the state announced that vaccine providers could begin immunizing Texans in group 1B—those over age 65 and those with pre-existing conditions.

The experiences of Texans in that group gives you the impression that we've responded to an ongoing crisis with a mad-dening, high-stakes scavenger hunt. In Harris County, for example, there are dozens of providers that have partnered with the state to distribute vaccines, but making an appointment at any of them seems to require persistence, endless phone calls, and a hefty dose of luck.

Overall, the distribution process has been inefficient and confusing. As of Dec. 31, according to DSHS, some 283,000 people across Texas—roughly 45,000 in Harris County—had received the first dose of the vaccine. That's of the 773,000 doses the state had shipped to various providers, up to that point.

And it's a worryingly low figure, according to public health professionals, given that we'll need to vaccinate up to 80 percent of the population to achieve the herd immunity that will allow normal life to resume. Dr. Peter Hotez, professor and dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, has pointed to the straightforward back-of-the-envelope math: with roughly 30 million people in Texas, we should be aiming for a million immunizations a week to achieve herd immunity by mid-year.

Last week, as these difficulties began coming to light, Gov. Greg Abbott pointed the finger at the state's hospitals and other vaccine providers.

"A significant portion of vaccines distributed across Texas might be sitting on hospital shelves as opposed to being given to vulnerable Texans," Abbott said on Twitter.

"The state urges vaccine providers to quickly provide all shots," he continued. "We get plenty more each week."

In the Houston area, at least, providers say they're doing just that. And Texans are having unpleasant memories of the early days of the pandemic, when state leaders such as Abbott took a largely hands-off approach to the public health response—intervening only when local leaders in cities such as Houston and Austin crossed what he deemed to be a red line.

"Here we are, once again, hoping that private companies will figure out a decent vaccine distribution system since the State of Texas sure hasn't," said state Rep. Erin Zwiener, a Democrat, on Twitter. "But that means it will be disparate and confusing and hard for our constituents to navigate."

These issues aren't unique to Texas. Even states with relatively robust public health systems have seen what Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker described this week as a "lumpy and bumpy" rollout.

An exasperated U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney of Utah vented in a statement on New Year's Day.

"That comprehensive vaccination plans have not been developed at the federal level and sent to the states as models is as incomprehensible as it is inexcusable," Romney said.

"It was unrealistic to assume that the health care workers already overburdened with COVID care could take on a massive vaccination program," he continued. "So too is the claim that CVS and Walgreens will save the day: they don't have excess personnel available to inoculate millions of Americans. Nor are they equipped to deal with the rare but serious reactions which may occur."

The distribution of COVID vaccines is, without question, a matter of urgency. We begin the new year with more than 12,000 Texans hospitalized due to the virus, and public health experts fretting about the impact of holiday gatherings and travel on those statistics—as well as reports that cases of a more transmissible variant of the

virus have been confirmed in the United States.

The state's plan to rely on public/private partnerships to distribute the vaccine may be sensible, given Texas's extant public health infrastructure. But, at the minimum, we need better communication from state leaders about how Texans who are eligible for the vaccine can access it—not finger-pointing and politics.

HOUSTON'S FIRST PUBLIC COVID-19 VACCINE LOCATION OFFICIALLY OPENS

HOUSTON.—On Saturday, Houston's first public COVID-19 vaccine location opened on the city's Southside. City and state leaders believe this could be one of the first public Coronavirus vaccine locations to open in the country. "Houston may be the very first city of this size to setup a massive distribution of vaccines," said Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee. "I believe that deserves an applause."

The site, located off Knight Road in South Houston, had a long line of cars surrounding the parking lot early Saturday morning.

"The goal will be to get these vaccines out as quickly as we get them" said Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner.

The free Coronavirus shots were originally planned to be given to people who made appointments over the phone. However, the Houston Health Department quickly had to change their plan after being overwhelmed with calls.

Within an hour of opening their call center, the Houston Health Department tweeted, "The volume of calls to our COVID-19 call center overwhelmed the system and it's currently experiencing technical issues . . ."

"Call-in centers across the board received about 250,000 calls today," said Mayor Turner. "The system was literally overwhelmed, so we went to Plan B. Plan B was on-site registration."

"Seven out of 10 people who die from COVID are 65 years and older," said Houston Health Department Director Stephen Williams. "If you look in line, we're actually seeing those folks, and I'm grateful for that."

Texas recently started Phase 1B of the state's COVID-19 vaccine distribution plan. Now, front-line medical workers, people at least 65 years-old, or adults with chronic health issues can get vaccinated.

"Even though there's a lot of vaccine hesitancy, there's still a strong desire from people to get the vaccine," said Mayor Turner.

According to Mayor Turner, he hopes to have the City of Houston open a mass distribution location for Coronavirus shots by the end of the week.

"The New York Mayor announced that they were going to try to do 1-million vaccines in the month of January," said Mayor Turner. "I think we can do the same thing in the month of January. I'd like to do even more than that."

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, FDA is considering to halve the amount of vaccines going to Americans. This haphazard way will not work. And the budget bill that is before us gives Congress the insight into how agencies plan their work.

So, is FEMA well-funded to take care of a pandemic? Were they funded the way they should have been in case a pandemic came and they were the right agency to do it?

Please remember, when we were flagging around and flustering around at the beginning of COVID-19, the PPE had to be taken over by FEMA.

That is what happened. We were struggling. People were fighting over PPE. Governors were out on the market. They were making negotiations individually with China while their health professionals were dying or reusing masks or reusing PPE. FEMA came in and did it.

Mr. Speaker, I will be discussing this even further, but I support this legislation because it gives Members of Congress the ability to know budget and appropriations so that if a pandemic comes, what agency can handle it? FEMA, because it has the funding.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support the underlying legislation, and I look forward to this further discussion.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of H.R. 22, the Congressional Budget Justification Transparency Act, which requires congressional budget justifications to be posted online in a centralized, searchable database, as well as on a Federal agency's websites.

The bill also would require the Office of Management and Budget to maintain and regularly update a public list of agencies expected to submit congressional budget justifications, the date they are submitted to Congress, and when they are posted online.

This bill is identical to one that passed the House under suspension in the last Congress.

As a member of the Budget Committee, I applaud this progovernment budget transparency legislation because it will make sure that the people we represent know and understand how each agency is spending taxpayer dollars.

Budget transparency is important during ordinary time but is much more important during extraordinary times like a global pandemic.

I am particularly focused on federal pandemic response that FEMA is engaged in as it relates to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have worked on community access to testing and through this effort have opened over 40 testing centers in and around Houston, Texas.

Now that there are vaccines it is time to pivot to vaccinations.

For this reason, I will be introducing a new bill that will address vaccine delivery to every community across the nation.

Making FEMA the lead agency is the first step, the next important is making sure the American people have access to information on how the agency is accomplishing the task and at what cost.

My bill would establish: FEMA as the National Coordinator of vaccine transport and delivery; Safe and effective supply chain transport, delivery, and site use of vaccines; Broad Stakeholder Engagement; No picking business winners or losers; and Implementing CDC COVID-19 Vaccine Recommendations.

FEMA will be empowered to:

Lead the effort for vaccine delivery from the receipt from manufacturing facilities to delivery to designated inoculation sites (hospital, clinic, doctors' offices, schools, places of worship, community centers, parks, or neighborhood gathering locations, etc.)

Develop and deploy a fully staffed and resourced 24-7 advanced real-time tracking system that allows FEMA to monitor shipments of vaccine units that can provide end-to-end transparency on the temperature, real-

time location, origin, and destination data, anticipated time of arrival, and update recipients on the progress of their delivery and report on changes that may impact expected delivery or the viability of the vaccine while in transit;

Provide an advanced communication system that allows public health departments to communicate their vaccine readiness, their capability of receiving vaccines, delivery locations, details of facility capability of storing, securing, personnel authorized to receive deliveries, logistics for delivering vaccines to patients, report on vaccine receipts, condition of vaccines, patient reactions, and feedback on how to improve the process;

Design custom Apps for use by public health agencies, doctors' offices, etc. to be provided to patients to communicate information on the vaccine being received and the date and location of a second dose if required. The App should generate a token that corresponds to their vaccination record to ensure that the right vaccine is administered should a second inoculation be required and to ensure that a person is not vaccinated with different vaccines, additional information such as vaccine effectiveness period may be addressed as more is learned about this;

Secure transportation for delivery or use of vaccines, and, when requested, security for the vaccine delivery sites or inoculation locations to ensure the life and safety of personnel and patients who seek to provide or receive vaccinations are free of interference or threat;

Provide public education and patient engagement through the provision of inoculations of persons in areas and locations where vulnerable populations are under performing in getting vaccinations;

Waive authority of the states to share vaccination data with HHS;

Provide HHS with the capacity to manage the inoculations data on persons and tracking the second vaccination to ensure full immunity and to determine when enough vaccinations have been administered to unique persons to achieve herd immunity. HHS shall protect Vaccination Data as HIPAA protected data, and under the Privacy Act, which shall not allow a waiver of any provision of that law; and the Freedom of Information Act shall not apply to the records maintained.

Provide civil fines of up to \$10,000 per violation, per instance; and criminal penalties of 5 years in prison for violation of this section; or for the use of the information outside the specific purpose of the data collection, which is to assure full inoculation of individuals; and determination of local, state and national herd immunity goals being achieved. Include a data retention limitation—all records shall be destroyed after 5 years—Sunset this provision after 5 years.

Provide an ombudsman to support: public (tribal, territorial, state, and local government); stakeholder input on the work being done; provide advocacy and advice for those who elect not to be vaccinated; and champion the privacy, civil liberty rights on behalf of the American people.

Waive state laws regarding management of inoculation data;

Provide HHS with the capacity as evidenced by the agency's prior experience in managing healthcare.gov, to manage the inoculations data on persons; for the purpose of tracking the second vaccination to ensure full immunity and the management of national inoculation

goals. The protection of inoculation medical information is provided by the: Federal HIPAA medical information privacy law; the Privacy Act and eliminate access to that information through the Freedom of Information Act; and providing for civil and criminal penalties for access or use of the information outside the specific purposes of the collection, which are to ensure inoculations; and determination of progress in herd immunity goals. Patient Inoculation Data retention limitation—all medical records on inoculation of persons under this title shall be destroyed after 5 years—Sunset this provision after 5 years.

Keep oversight Committees in the House and Senate, and the American people informed through daily and weekly reporting requirements comprising data the CDC determines to be relevant and have public benefit in measuring and reporting on inoculation statistics;

Establish a stakeholder advisory board to support the collaboration and cooperation of participants that shall include representatives from, federal, state, and local governments, businesses, colleges, universities, K–12 schools, hospitals, clinics, professional medical associations. Others as deemed essential to the success of a national vaccination program.

Lead government collaboration with Stakeholders in establishing vaccine inoculation centers in locations that shall include: Stadiums; Arenas; K–12 schools; Colleges and Universities; Places of Worship; and Other locations determined to be conducive to reaching the greatest number of person who are in need of inoculations.

EMPOWERING FEMA

FEMA will be empowered to engage all stakeholders and marshals the resources of the federal government where needed to accomplish the objectives.

FEMA employs about 20,000 people nationwide who are stationed in 10 regional offices and the Washington DC headquarters.

FEMA has the authority during times of emergency to leverage its tremendous capacity to coordinate within the federal government, pull federal agency personnel from agencies throughout the federal government to make sure America is equipped and prepared to respond to disasters.

I ask that my Colleagues join me in support of H.R. 22, and greater accountability to the American public on what the federal government is doing and the budget justification that supports expenditures.

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of H.R. 22, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 22.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1230

INSPECTOR GENERAL PROTECTION ACT

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 23) to require congressional notification for certain changes in status of inspectors general, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 23

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Inspector General Protection Act”.

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE IN STATUS OF INSPECTOR GENERAL.

(a) CHANGE IN STATUS OF INSPECTOR GENERAL OF OFFICES.—Section 3(b) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

(1) by inserting “, is placed on paid or unpaid non-duty status,” after “is removed from office”;

(2) by inserting “, change in status,” after “any such removal”; and

(3) by inserting “, change in status,” after “before the removal”.

(b) CHANGE IN STATUS OF INSPECTOR GENERAL OF DESIGNATED FEDERAL ENTITIES.—Section 8G(e)(2) of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.) is amended—

(1) by inserting “, is placed on paid or unpaid non-duty status,” after “office”;

(2) by inserting “, change in status,” after “any such removal”; and

(3) by inserting “, change in status,” after “before the removal”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. PRESIDENTIAL EXPLANATION OF FAILURE TO NOMINATE AN INSPECTOR GENERAL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3349d the following new section:

“§ 3349e. Presidential explanation of failure to nominate an Inspector General

“If the President fails to make a formal nomination for a vacant Inspector General position that requires a formal nomination by the President to be filled within the period beginning on the date on which the vacancy occurred and ending on the day that is 210 days after that date, the President shall communicate, within 30 days after the end of such period, to Congress in writing—

“(1) the reasons why the President has not yet made a formal nomination; and

“(2) a target date for making a formal nomination.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to 3349d the following new item:

“3349e. Presidential explanation of failure to nominate an Inspector General.”

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and