

Turner	Waltz	Wilson (SC)
Valadao	Weber (TX)	Wittman
Van Drew	Webster (FL)	Womack
Van Duyne	Wenstrup	Yakym
Van Orden	Westerman	Zinke
Walberg	Williams (NY)	

NOES—206

Adams	Goldman (NY)	Pascrell
Aguilar	Gomez	Payne
Allred	Gonzalez,	Pelosi
Amo	Vicente	Peltola
Auchincloss	Gottheimer	Perez
Balint	Green, Al (TX)	Peters
Barragan	Hayes	Pettersen
Beatty	Himes	Phillips
Bera	Horsford	Pingree
Beyer	Houlahan	Pocan
Bishop (GA)	Hoyer	Porter
Blumenauer	Hoyle (OR)	Pressley
Blunt Rochester	Huffman	Qrigley
Bonamici	Ivey	Ramirez
Bowman	Jackson (IL)	Raskin
Boyle (PA)	Jackson (NC)	Ross
Brown	Jackson Lee	Ruiz
Brownley	Jacobs	Ruppersberger
Budzinski	Jayapal	Ryan
Bush	Jeffries	Salinas
Caraveo	Johnson (GA)	Sánchez
Carbajal	Kamlager-Dove	Sarbanes
Cárdenas	Kaptur	Scanlon
Carson	Keating	Schakowsky
Carter (LA)	Kelly (IL)	Schiff
Cartwright	Khanna	Schneider
Casar	Kildee	Scholten
Case	Kilmer	Schrier
Casten	Krishnamoorthi	Scott (VA)
Castor (FL)	Kuster	Scott, David
Castro (TX)	Landsman	Sewell
Cherfilus-	Larsen (WA)	Sherman
McCormick	Larson (CT)	Sherrill
Chu	Lee (CA)	Slotkin
Clark (MA)	Lee (NV)	Smith (WA)
Clarke (NY)	Lee (PA)	Sorensen
Cleaver	Leger Fernandez	Soto
Clyburn	Levin	Spanberger
Cohen	Lieu	Stansbury
Connolly	Lofgren	Stanton
Correa	Lynch	Stevens
Costa	Magaziner	Strickland
Courtney	Manning	Suoizzi
Craig	Matsui	Swalwell
Crockett	McBath	Sykes
Cuellar	McClellan	Thanedar
David (KS)	McCollum	Thompson (CA)
Davis (NC)	McGarvey	Thompson (MS)
Dean (PA)	McGovern	Titus
DeGette	Meeks	Tlaib
DeLauro	Menendez	Tokuda
DelBene	Meng	Tonko
Deluzio	Mfume	Torres (CA)
DeSaulnier	Moore (WI)	Torres (NY)
Dingell	Morelle	Trahan
Doggett	Moskowitz	Trone
Escobar	Moulton	Underwood
Eshoo	Mrvan	Vargas
Espallat	Mullin	Vasquez
Evans	Nadler	Veasey
Fletcher	Napolitano	Velázquez
Foster	Neal	Wasserman
Foushee	Neguse	Schultz
Frost	Nickel	Waters
Gallego	Norcross	Watson Coleman
Garamendi	Ocasio-Cortez	Wexton
Garcia (IL)	Omar	Wild
Garcia (TX)	Pallone	Williams (GA)
Garcia, Robert	Panetta	Wilson (FL)
Golden (ME)	Pappas	

NOT VOTING—17

Buck	Gosar	Owens
Comer	Granger	Simpson
Crow	Grijalva	Takano
Davis (IL)	Harder (CA)	Wagner
Donalds	Kim (NJ)	Williams (TX)
Frankel, Lois	Mills	

□ 1407

So the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UTILIZING SPACE EFFICIENTLY AND IMPROVING TECHNOLOGIES ACT OF 2023

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PERRY. 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 H.R. 6276. The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 6276.

The Chair appoints the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. KIGGANS) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1416

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 6276) to direct the Administrator of General Services and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to identify the utilization rate of certain public buildings and federally-leased space, and for other purposes, with Mrs. KIGGANS from Virginia in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY).

Mr. PERRY. Madam Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chair, H.R. 6276, the USE IT Act of 2023, implements commonsense and reasonable space occupancy standards to get Federal employees back into the office or the agency will have to lose that unnecessary, unneeded, unused space.

A recent Government Accountability Office review of how agencies were actually using their headquarters space here in Washington, D.C., found that 17 of the 24 agencies GAO reviewed used 25 percent or less of their space—17 of the 24, 25 percent or less of their space.

One agency even admitted that if 100 percent of their employees showed up, they would still only use 67 percent of their own building.

Even more troubling is some agencies were using only 9 percent. They can't even make double digits of their space. To be clear, we are not just paying for space to sit empty. Throughout the whole time, we are paying for utilities

and services such as heating, cooling, lighting, regular power, maintenance, security for the entire space that no one is in.

Empty Federal buildings are not only a drain to the Federal taxpayer, they also don't produce investments needed for local economies because nobody is in the building. There is nobody there to go out to lunch.

The bottom line is agencies should bring Federal workers back to the office. The reality is underutilized space has been a chronic problem in Federal real estate and is one reason Federal property has been on the GAO's high-risk list since 2003. This problem was identified 20 years ago, and it is still in existence today.

In order to address the issue, H.R. 6276 would use similar metrics to those used by the GAO and require Federal agencies to report on their actual utilization rates, set a target utilization of not less than 60 percent, and require the General Services Administration to report to Congress if any agency fails to meet that standard.

Agencies will be given time to meet the 60 percent utilization standard, but if they fail to do so, they would have to lose or give up their excess space.

Ultimately, the results of H.R. 6276 will benefit not just the Federal taxpayer, but also allow unused Federal buildings to be put to better use for the local communities.

Madam Chair, I urge support of this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chair, H.R. 6276 directs the OMB and the GSA to establish standards for measuring occupancy in Federal buildings. The bill directs the GSA and Federal tenants to use sensors to measure occupancy, requires the heads of Federal agencies to report occupancy and utilization data, and directs the GSA to notify agencies and Congress when occupancy in a Federal building falls below 60 percent, at which time GSA would be permitted to consolidate tenants.

The bill further requires OMB and GSA to develop a plan to consolidate agency headquarters buildings in the national capital region that will result in the utilization rate of 60 percent or more.

Now, I agree with Representative PERRY's goal to reduce agency costs by giving up unneeded space. I have consistently made that point to him and others on the committee.

I am opposed to this bill. The bill defines occupancy as the total number of employees physically working from their offices at least 5 days per week. Many Federal employees may not sit at their desks all day every day, including Federal firefighters, disaster responders, law enforcement officers, Border Patrol agents, food safety inspectors, TSA supervisors, National Parks Service rangers, and more.

These employees would not be included in occupancy counts required by this bill. Also not counted would be the Federal employees who work alternative work schedules. Federal law grants the Office of Personnel Management authority to promulgate regulations to administer alternative work schedule programs and permits agencies to allow the use of flexible schedules.

This authority extends to employees of any executive agency, any military department, and the Library of Congress.

To have an accurate picture of space needs in Federal buildings, all Federal employees occupying buildings should be counted. A full-time employee with an approved work schedule is still a full-time employee. This bill fails to consider that fact.

I have concerns that this bill does not adequately consider the complexity of the Federal leasing process—a process that, frankly, is far too complex.

Directing the OMB and GSA to reduce space if occupancy falls below 60 percent sounds fiscally responsible. However, in most currently leased locations, if agency space is reduced, the government would still be on the hook for the original costs in the lease contract because most existing lease contracts do not include partial termination rights.

In prospective leases, partial termination rights would increase the cost of leases for the government.

Again, I want to work with the chairman and the committee to resize the Federal real estate footprint and reduce costs, not unnecessarily increase those costs. This bill falls short.

After this period of general debate, we are going to move on to debate the seven amendments made in order by the Rules Committee. I will not be opposing any of those amendments, but, unfortunately, the seven amendments do not fix the underlying defects in the bill, so I will still oppose final passage.

I am disappointed the Rules Committee did not make in order the amendment that Representative TITUS offered that would have adjusted the calculation of the occupancy rate to include employees with approved alternative work schedules. This fix would have gone a long way toward alleviating my concerns with the legislation. Not allowing even a vote on this amendment is really a missed opportunity for bipartisanship on this bill.

Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PERRY. Madam Chair, to my good friend, the ranking member of the full committee, the current administration doesn't even count every single employee in the Federal system. This bill, as he knows, does not affect flex schedules or telework schedules. It has nothing to do with that. We can, in this case, have our cake and eat it, too.

We can have this bill. We can get our occupancy rate up to 60 percent. We

can pass the bipartisan amendment that myself and Representative AUCHINCLOSS had worked together on and is in order. We can try and right-size the people that actually show up to work while acknowledging in the Federal system that not everybody has to be in the office.

Madam Chair, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES), my good friend.

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Madam Chair, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for promoting this legislation, for carrying it through the committee.

Let me provide a little bit of background because I think there has been some confusion here.

If we look at occupancy rates of Federal buildings from pre-pandemic to current, then 54 percent of the buildings are occupied as compared to pre-pandemic.

Let me say this again. If you look at pre-pandemic occupancy and compare it to today, you have 54 percent occupancy as compared to what would have been 100 percent at the time, 100 percent of those slots filled.

What this legislation does is, it says that if leases are occupied 60 percent or less, then the government needs to give up those leases.

My friend from Washington has brought up the fact that you have folks who do telework and flexible schedules and things along those lines. There is a 40 percent cushion, number 1. Number 2, I think something that is incumbent upon folks in government that are using public money to pay for this—let me say it again: \$2 billion a year to operate and maintain, \$5 billion a year to pay for leases. It is incumbent upon these folks that are managing this to make sure that you are properly coordinating schedules.

If people are teleworking or have flexible schedules, that is fine. Just manage them in a way that maximizes the use of the space.

Look, this is ridiculous what is going on. It is \$7 billion a year. If we went around the Congress and asked Members of Congress, do you have something in your district that needs funding and you have been unable to get funding for, every single one of us could spend \$7 billion.

We have been trying to fight for a new bridge crossing the Mississippi River for years and years now. It should have been done 40 years ago.

Let's be clear: It only requires divestment or elimination of the lease if the occupancy is less than 60 percent. What private business would even do that? I think it actually should be a higher standard in an ideal situation.

As Chairman PERRY said, according to a Government Accountability Office study that went through, they looked at 24 Federal agencies and 17 of the 24 only used 25 percent of the space. This is insane. There is better uses of taxpayer funds.

In closing, Madam Chair, I remind everyone here, our current government

debt is approximately \$34.5 trillion. Each individual taxpayer's share of that is around \$257,000. I couldn't afford that. I don't think we need to be irresponsibly and recklessly spending taxpayer dollars in this environment or ever. I commend my friend from Pennsylvania for pushing this legislation, and I urge adoption.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Chair, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER).

Mr. BEYER. Madam Chair, I rise in firm opposition to H.R. 6276, the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act.

Contrary to what the title would suggest, this bill is an irresponsible partisan effort that would seriously harm not only our Federal workforce located in the national capital region, but simply ignores the practical realities of Federal jobs.

While I agree that we should always help our agencies run more efficiently and decrease spending where we can, this bill reveals ignorance of the current process the GSA undertakes when it comes to contracting, evaluations, and consolidations.

Further, the bill exempts warehouses and laboratories from its space restrictions, but doesn't name secure classified information facilities, SCIFs, as an exempted category.

I am concerned that this would cause negative implications for local facilities that have been designed specifically for use of SCIFs and for our national defense work broadly.

Finally, this bill offers no consideration for workers with alternative work schedules, people who do field work, people who work nontraditional hours or days, or those who have telework arrangements.

Don't get me wrong, many of our colleagues and I support the idea of our Federal agencies consolidating spaces to repurpose parts of their budgets. They have already done that with the Patent and Trademark Office in my district, or to decrease spending, but this bill actually does the opposite because by cutting short contracts we increase spending.

GSA already assists agencies with consolidating unused spaces. If you take out the bill language that matches what GSA is already doing, it is easy to read this as just a partisan ploy to move agency headquarters out of the national capital region and attack Federal employees.

□ 1430

There is no need to introduce a bill to mandate work that GSA already does and to threaten to remove agency workspaces because of arbitrary building occupancy rates.

Madam Chair, I have invested in and managed real estate for many decades. This bill doesn't offer an appropriate metric to evaluate space usage, need, or work productivity. I didn't consider places in my car stores that are occupied by cars instead of people as wasted

space. It is a matter of appropriateness. Any Member here who would allow their staff to work from home would be a hypocrite to oppose this bill.

We need the best and brightest to want to work for the Federal Government, and we want to utilize telework and nontraditional hours or days where it is appropriate. After all, we want the most productive and effective Federal workforce. Applying 1950s mentalities of butts in seats 5 days a week doesn't reflect the actual work that most Americans do. What if they need to spend every day in a SCIF or at a site visit?

For these reasons, at the appropriate time, I will offer a motion to recommit this bill back to committee.

If the House rules permitted, I would have offered the motion with an important amendment to this bill offered by Representative TITUS.

Madam Chair, this amendment would ensure that all Federal employees, including those using alternative work schedules, are counted for utilization rates at Federal buildings. This amendment would significantly alleviate some concerns coming from workers who use alternative work schedules and whose access to reliable workspaces would be threatened by this bill.

Madam Chair, I include in the RECORD the text of the amendment.

Mr. Beyer moves to recommit the bill H.R. 6276 to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendment:

Strike paragraph (7) of section 2(a) of the bill and insert the following:

(7). OCCUPANCY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The term “occupancy” means the total number of employees covered under section 6101 of title 5, United States Code, that are provided a workspace in a public building or federally-leased space for purposes of carrying out in-person, official duties, as described under such section.

(B) EXCEPTIONS.—An employee shall be considered to be covered under subparagraph (A) if such employee is a full-time employee for whom a Federal agency has established an alternative workweek schedule pursuant to—

(i) section 6122 of title 5, United States Code; or

(ii) section 6127 of such title.

Mr. BEYER. Madam Chair, I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for the motion to recommit.

Mr. PERRY. Madam Chair, historically, for 20 years anyhow, while this problem has been identified, these issues have historically been bipartisan. In fact, it was former President Obama who advocated agencies to freeze and then reduce their space footprint, recognizing that agencies had far more space than they needed.

To the gentleman who just spoke, GSA actually wants to do it. They want to reduce the space, but the agencies won't allow it. Why would they? They get so much space, and they don't have to deal with managing it or not. They just get the space, and they can

continue on their other work with as much space as they need, sometimes 3,000 square feet per employee.

A lot of people in America would like to have a house that is 3,000 square feet for their whole family. If they were watching today and found out that the Federal Government was paying for that, that their taxes were paying for that when they couldn't afford it themselves, they would be furious.

The Obama administration set a standard that agencies had to account for things like teleworking, actual space usage, and planning for the space. For example, in an agency that may have 1,000 people assigned to a building, only a portion of those people would be counted when it came to desks and space. It puts into consideration things like teleworking. The Obama administration even proposed selling the Department of Labor building based on this type of space utilization and counting.

More recently, I know that the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia has previously proposed legislation to move and sell the Department of Energy, but my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say that Republicans just want to kick Federal employees out of their buildings. We don't. We would actually prefer that they come back to work.

Additionally, if they come back to work, I think it is very reasonable for us to say that we want the building to be 60 percent occupied. Sixty percent is, to me, a pretty good compromise with my friends on the other side of the aisle who are saying we just want to sell buildings and kick Federal employees out of their buildings.

We don't. We want them to come to work, but we want them to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money and to use the space efficiently. When they don't need it, like everybody else would do, give up that space to be utilized either by other agencies in the Federal Government or by the political subdivision. Some town or city where that building is located should have the advantage to use that space so that they can increase their tax rolls, so that they can help their vendors out on the streets, and so that they can help their community.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Chair, I do think it is incumbent on me to characterize my position and recharacterize my friend's characterization of my position, which, as I recall, was to close buildings and kick out Federal employees.

That is not my position. In fact, in many ways, I share the goals of the chair of the subcommittee, that it is clear we have much more federally owned and leased space than is currently being used given the work schedules and changes that have taken place since COVID. It is necessary for

us to look at how best to consolidate that space, to rightsize that space, given its usage.

The problem I have is the hammer approach that this particular bill takes by setting a hard and fast 60 percent rule rather than looking at the flexibility necessary when you are considering agency by agency, division by division within those agencies, and how that space can be used properly and most efficiently.

We have worked on a bipartisan basis on the committee on a wide range of policies, including rightsizing the Federal real estate footprint. Just yesterday, we passed, on suspension, the FASTA Reform Act, a bill that the chairman himself sponsored that will expedite the disposal of excess Federal property.

When we work together, we can make some really good progress on this and other issues, but today's bill does fall short by failing to take into account the complexity of the Federal leasing process and using an incomplete and flawed metric for measuring the occupancy rate of Federal buildings.

I do welcome the opportunity to work with any Member in good faith, and we have done that, again, on many issues in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. We all want to make genuine improvements on the Federal real estate program.

Mr. Chair, I do oppose this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Chair, I include in the RECORD the Statement of Administration Policy that the administration strongly opposes H.R. 6276; a letter dated March 12 from the AFL-CIO in opposition to H.R. 6276; a letter dated March 11 from the Federal Workers Alliance opposing H.R. 6276; and a letter dated March 8 from the American Federation of Government Employees opposing H.R. 6276.

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY

H.R. 6276—UTILIZING SPACE EFFICIENTLY AND IMPROVING TECHNOLOGIES (USE IT) ACT OF 2023—REP. PERRY, R-PA

The Administration strongly opposes H.R. 6276, the USE IT Act, which would direct the Director of the Office of Management Budget (OMB) and the Administrator of the General Services Administration (GSA) to ensure that Federal agencies' building utilization meets an arbitrary level of not less than a 60 percent average each year and, if an agency does not reach the target, GSA and OMB would have to forcibly reduce the agency's space. While the Administration believes that the Federal real estate portfolio needs to be evaluated and optimized, the Administration believes that agencies' unique missions require individualized approaches to improving space utilization. H.R. 6276 does not consider the varying mission and technical requirements of individual agencies or the age and original design of affected facilities when directing the OMB Director and GSA Administrator to develop and implement a plan to consolidate multiple agency headquarters functions into fewer buildings within the National Capital Region. These buildings, many of which are historic, would require major modernization and reconfiguration, prior to supporting dramatically increased occupancy levels. Instead, the Administration recommends strengthening the

collection of utilization data by Federal agencies and providing sufficient funding to GSA and affected agencies to execute necessary consolidations. The Administration is committed to working with agencies to improve their utilization of Federal space and to identify opportunities to reduce space.

AFL-CIO,
March 12, 2024.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the AFL-CIO, I write to express our opposition to H.R. 6276, the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act of 2023 (the USE IT Act). The metrics mandated by this act fail to accurately measure occupancy of federal buildings and leased space in a manner that reflects the distinctive ways federal workers perform their duties to benefit the public.

While the USE IT Act aims to track, measure and report on occupancy rates of federal buildings and federally leased space, the yardstick used to measure federal building and leased space occupancy is overly broad and unlikely to accurately reflect occupancy rates and efficiencies. The USE IT Act requires the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the General Services Administration (GSA) to determine whether a federal agency meets a 60 percent or higher occupancy rate. The 60 percent metric does not relate to the mission of a federal agency, or how federal workers do their jobs to achieve that mission.

Many federal workers, such as inspectors, law enforcement officers, and engineers, split their time between fieldwork and federal buildings or federal leased space. Other federal workers have agreements with their agency for alternative workplace arrangements. The overly broad metric penalizes federal agencies and their staff for long term work arrangements that function well.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of flexibility in how and where work was performed. Federal agencies had plans in place allowing federal workers in every state and the District of Columbia area to continue to serve the public during the pandemic, weather emergencies, or when federal buildings or leased spaces are inaccessible. The arbitrary 60 percent occupancy rate metric required by the USE IT Act makes it less likely that federal agencies and the workforce can continue to serve the public in an efficient and effective manner. I urge you to oppose the USE IT Act.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM SAMUEL,
Director, Government Affairs.

FEDERAL WORKERS ALLIANCE,
March 11, 2024.

*House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.*

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: We write to you as the executive officers of the Federal Workers Alliance (FWA), a labor coalition representing over 550,000 Federal and Postal workers, to urge you to vote in opposition of H.R. 6276, the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act of 2023, also known as the USE IT Act.

As you know, the USE IT Act would direct the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the General Services Administration (GSA) to establish standard methodologies to measure occupancy in federal buildings and federally leased space. The bill also requires federal agencies to work with GSA to implement technologies to track occupancy and usage rates of federal buildings and to provide reports to Congress on the collected data. GSA is then required by the act to take actions against agencies in federal buildings that report less than 60 percent usage rates, such as consolidating building space with

other agencies or selling excess building space.

In setting an arbitrary number, such as 60 percent, the bill fails to account for ongoing strategic planning, current changes, and future trends in accordance with the federal government's space requirements. Making premature or not fully evaluated rearrangements of federal space for the sake of satisfying an arbitrary number is often a costly and wasteful endeavor, especially if the same or equivalent space must be repurchased or leased at a higher rate in the future. It is better to leave these decisions to the authorizations and appropriations processes within Congress, and allow those decisions to overlay with GSA and the agencies themselves to ensure that decisions are based on strategy and economics, rather than an arbitrary number.

The FWA further opposes the USE IT Act because OMB and GSA, in addition to other federal agencies, currently measure occupancy and usage rates within federally owned and leased buildings. Since 2020, new technologies have been piloted to collect this data and GSA reports that it has already consolidated federal spaces based on occupancy rates and usage data. GSA is expected to continue to track this data and consolidate office space consistent with the agency's current practices, therefore rendering the USE IT Act unnecessary.

OMB, GSA, and all federal agencies have been adjusting for the efficient use of office space since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to do so as agencies establish and implement policies relating to in-person work for federal employees. Agency leaders and federal employees alike now have a profound understanding of how they can best utilize building space and remote work. It is our position that the USE IT Act will only create obstacles for agencies in carrying out their mission in service to the American public.

Thank you for considering our request. We are available to provide further information about our opposition to the USE IT Act of 2023. If you have any questions, please contact FWA legislative cochairs Faraz Kahn or Steve Lenkan.

Sincerely,

Federal Education Association (FEA); International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF); International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE); International Plate Printers, Die Stampers, Plate Makers and Engravers of North America (PPDSPM&E of N.A.); National Association of Agriculture Employees (NAAE); National Association of Government Employees, SEIU (NAGE); National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE-IAM); National Weather Service Employees Organization (NWSEO); Patent Office Professional Association (POPA); Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS).

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO,

Washington, DC, March 8, 2024.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), which represents over 750,000 federal and District of Columbia employees in 70 agencies, I write to express AFGE's opposition to H.R. 6276, the "Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act of 2023," which would direct the General Services Administration and the Office of Management and Budget to measure occupancy in federal buildings and federally leased space and reduce or consolidate space if utilization rates fall below 60 percent.

H.R. 6276's stated goal is to reduce federal real estate holdings and right size the federal portfolio. While there may be benefits de-

rived from studying the federal government's real estate footprint, AFGE opposes the bill's blunt and seemingly arbitrary metric to determine when a federal agency fails to meet a 60 percent or higher building occupancy rate. This metric fails in two important ways: (1) it ignores the tens of thousands of federal workers, many of whom AFGE represents, whose work is split, often unpredictably from week-to-week, between an agency building and the field, such as food safety inspectors, law enforcement officers, Border Patrol agents, TSA supervisors, park rangers, and firefighters, to name only a few; (2) it treats alternative work schedule programs the same way, making no distinction between the agency employee who, pursuant to an agency workplace arrangement, teleworks one day a week and the employee who teleworks two or three days a week; and (3) despite a few narrow exceptions, it treats personnel occupancy as the sole measure of whether a building is needed, overlooking the full range of federal building uses that includes healthcare, research and development, equipment maintenance and repair, manufacturing, meeting space, and hearing rooms. Indeed, it would be hard to find many sizeable private employers who treat human occupancy as the sole determinant of their space needs; yet the federal government is the largest and most diverse employer in the world.

H.R. 6276's failure in the utilization rate calculation to account for distinctions in the federal workforce, the role of alternative work schedule programs in meeting agencies recruitment and retention needs, the types of work federal workers perform, and, particularly, the blurry line between so-called desk jobs and jobs of a more physical nature risks inaccurately producing building utilization rates that fall below the 60 percent threshold. Such inaccurate calculations in turn would force agencies to either consolidate with other agencies or sell or dispose of "excess space" that in fact is needed and should be retained to accommodate agency employees who spend all or significant amounts of their time working from an agency building.

H.R. 6276 also ignores important lessons of the recent past. As the COVID-19 pandemic vividly demonstrated, major emergencies can threaten the continuity of government operations, both in the District of Columbia and outside the Capitol region where almost 80 percent of federal workers are employed. To prepare for these crises, federal agencies have adopted polices and technologies to ensure their employees can perform their jobs safely, securely, and without interruption from either an agency building or remotely. Combining the use of alternative work schedule programs where appropriate with traditional workplace arrangements has contributed to this preparation, enabling federal agencies and their employees to serve the public efficiently in ordinary times and quickly adapt to exigent circumstances in times of crisis. If enacted, H.R. 6276 would discourage agencies from including alternative work schedule programs as part of their contingency planning.

Please oppose H.R. 6276, the "Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act of 2023," if you have questions or need additional information, please contact Daniel Horowitz, Keith Abouchar, or Julie Tippens.

Sincerely,

JULIE N. TIPPENS,

Director, Legislative Department.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chair, may I inquire as to how much time is remaining.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. MOYLAN). The gentleman from Pennsylvania has 20 minutes remaining.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chair, I do want to respond to my good friend from Washington.

I didn't mean to mischaracterize his assessment or his comments. However, the speaker before the gentleman from Washington did essentially make those claims, and so I was answering that.

While I am here, I want to characterize what the public is seeing if they are reading *The Washington Times*. Here is an article from Wednesday, December 6, 2023, "Idea to fill empty Federal buildings with illegal immigrants," where DHS headquarters is 69 percent unused and Social Security offices are 93 percent vacant.

No wonder offices like mine deal with so many constituent calls when they can't get answers from the Social Security Administration.

We would like those folks to come back to work, but if they are not going to come back to work, could we stop having everybody, including Social Security recipients, pay for the empty building?

Here is another one from *The Washington Times*, dated Thursday, September 21, 2023: "Telework's empty buildings opens the door for Legionnaires' disease."

Well, isn't that wonderful? Won't that be great when the source of a new outbreak of Legionnaires' disease comes from a vacant Federal building that we are paying for?

Here is another one, "IG to investigate Federal offices left vacant by telework policies," from *The Washington Times*, and the date of this is Wednesday, October 18, 2023.

Finally, "Ghost towns: Federal office buildings are 80 percent vacant, government audit finds." This article is from *The Washington Times*, dated Thursday, October 26, 2023.

We have an opportunity here that shouldn't be partisan and should be pretty simple. All we are saying is: Federal agencies, can you come back to work at least 60 percent? Is that too much? It is 10 percent above 50 percent, which would be half empty. We find that very objectionable, but at least 60 percent should be something we agree on.

Mr. Chair, I include all the articles that I discussed previously in the RECORD.

[From the *Washington Times*, Dec. 6, 2023]
IDEA TO FILL EMPTY FEDERAL BUILDINGS WITH ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS SOLVES TWO PROBLEMS FOR BIDEN ADMIN

DHS HQ IS 69 PERCENT UNUSED, SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICES 93 PERCENT VACANT

(By Stephen Dinan)

The Biden administration is desperate to find shelter for all the illegal immigrants caught and released into the U.S.

Perhaps they could stay in federal office buildings.

The Department of Homeland Security's palatial headquarters in Washington's southeast quadrant sits nearly 70 percent vacant,

according to data released this week by Sen. Joni Ernst, Iowa Republican.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development, whose mission is to put Americans into homes, is even worse. Its headquarters is 93 percent vacant. So is the Social Security Administration's main building outside Baltimore.

The Office of Personnel Management, the government's human resources agency, is a ghost town with 88 percent of its space unoccupied. The General Services Administration, the government's chief landlord agency, can't fill its own headquarters, with an 89 percent vacancy rate.

Across two dozen departments and agencies, not a single one was at 50 percent capacity in the first three months of this year, according to Ms. Ernst's figures.

"While it's not the night before Christmas yet, there's not a creature stirring, not even a mouse, in the halls across this city," Ms. Ernst said in releasing the occupancy figures.

She said the Biden administration gave the numbers to her but didn't want them released publicly. She defied that demand, saying the public needs to know how bad things have become in the federal workforce.

"COVID's been over for years. Where are the workers?" she said.

The *Washington Times* reached out to the worst-performing agencies to ask about the vacancies and their plans to rectify matters.

None of the agencies provided a comment, though in response to federal officials, HUD and the Small Business Administration said their spaces were undergoing renovations during the test period, which contributed to a decrease in attendance.

The GSA controls more than 90 million square feet of office space in the Washington region alone, and the government holds about 511 million square feet nationally. GSA figures on 150 to 180 square feet of usable space per employee.

The 24 headquarters buildings for which Ms. Ernst released data were operating at about 20 percent of full use.

Occupancy is based on a building's capacity and the amount of use of its space. The data was based on average attendance during sample days in a three-month period from January through March and was derived from sign-ins, logins and badge swipes.

While offices sit empty, many American communities are overwhelmed by the surge of illegal immigrants whom the Biden administration has caught and released.

Ms. Ernst suggested a meeting of the minds.

"So-called sanctuary cities have run out of space to shelter the influx of immigrants that the Biden administration is allowing to enter the country illegally. With two-thirds of the Department of Homeland Security headquarters going unused, maybe the agency causing the problem can solve it by opening their doors," she told *The Times*.

Homeland Security, which has a use rate of 31 percent, did not respond to a request for comment on the idea.

Exact numbers are a closely held secret, but outside estimates say Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas has paroled 2 million illegal immigrants into the U.S., in addition to others caught and released or who sneaked in altogether.

The administration has moved to stick thousands of them at a National Park Service property in New York. It signed a lease with the city for the Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn.

That location lacks many amenities, and the tent city erected to house the migrants sits in a flood plain, critics charged.

House Republicans, joined by a smattering of Democrats, voted last week to cancel the

lease and to prevent migrants from being placed on other property held by federal land management agencies. That legislation, which is unlikely to make it through the Democratic-controlled Senate, does not appear to block migrants from being placed in buildings run by non-land-management agencies.

Meanwhile, vacancy at federal buildings is an increasingly touchy issue for the Biden administration, which has declared the pandemic emergency over and ordered employees back to work in person but has been met with resistance by those workers.

The comptroller general, in a report earlier this year, prodded agencies about the matter.

They offered a host of excuses for why they weren't filling space, including preparing for a possible surge of returning employees.

Some excuses seemed more territorial. The audit said some agencies seemed to worry that giving up their buildings or sharing space with others would make them seem less powerful than other agencies.

Even within departments and agencies, divisions were reluctant to share space such as conference rooms, the Government Accountability Office said.

[From the *Washington Times*, Sept. 21, 2023]

TELEWORK'S EMPTY BUILDINGS OPEN THE DOOR FOR LEGIONNAIRES' DISEASE

(By Stephen Dinan)

The water supply in at least six federal government buildings is contaminated with the bacterium that causes Legionnaires' disease, and the problem may be even more widespread, according to the inspector general who oversees U.S. properties.

One of the buildings is a work site for thousands of employees, one is a post office in Chicago and one houses a day care center.

Investigators said one culprit is pandemic teleworking, which has left buildings operating at less than capacity. Fewer people means less water is flushed through the pipes, creating a stagnant environment where *Legionella pneumophila* can proliferate.

[From the *Washington Times*, Oct. 18, 2023]

IG TO INVESTIGATE FEDERAL OFFICES LEFT VACANT BY TELEWORK POLICIES

(By Stephen Dinan)

A federal inspector general has opened an investigation into telework policies that have turned some government offices into ghost towns, risking the spread of disease and raising questions about how agencies deliver services.

The inspector general for the General Services Administration, which acts as the chief landlord for civilian executive branch agencies, confirmed the work in a letter to Sen. Joni Ernst, Iowa Republican, who says the government has not fully grappled with a host of questions about the barren buildings.

"My office shares your concerns about the effect of telework on GSA's ability to carry out its mission effectively and efficiently," acting Inspector General Robert Erickson told Ms. Ernst in a letter, which *The Washington Times* obtained. "My office plans to continue to devote attention to GSA's space utilization in our future oversight efforts."

[From the *Washington Times*, Oct. 26, 2023]

GHOST TOWNS: FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDINGS ARE 80% VACANT, GOVERNMENT AUDIT FINDS

(By Stephen Dinan)

The Agriculture Department is headquartered at the gateway between Washington and Virginia in a building rich with history—but on any given day, roughly 90 percent of it sits empty.

That's not an anomaly.

The Government Accountability Office surveyed two dozen federal agencies and found they averaged a roughly 80 percent vacancy rate during the study period earlier this year.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chair, Federal real property has remained on the GAO's high-risk list for more than 20 years. The Government Accountability Office has said this is a high risk for the last 20 years, and we are on the precipice. We are standing on the edge of providing a solution to the excess space that exists that we keep paying for.

At the same time, our debt has gone to \$34 trillion. By May, it will be \$35 trillion. We are not going to save trillions here, but we can save billions here. If you start adding up billions, maybe you will finally get to trillions. However, we are not saving anything right now, and we are not going to save any of this if we don't pass this bill.

This is our opportunity, Mr. Chair, to finally fix this problem, a problem that I will note has historically found bipartisan support to address the issue. Even on this occasion, when the bill was lacking, we had a hearing. We had a markup on it.

Friends on the other side of the aisle said: Would you listen to a way where potentially we could improve it?

Of course, we did, and we worked together. You are going to have an opportunity to vote on that amendment shortly.

The USE IT Act of 2023 is reasonable. It is commonsense legislation that simply says that if the Federal employees don't come back into the office, the taxpayer is not going to have to pay for the empty space.

We don't have any extra money in this town, Mr. Chair. Nobody has any extra money. Right here, we have identified it. This is where some of it is going unnecessarily. We can consolidate. We can sell things off.

Some of these agencies will probably get a new building, just at the right size, where their workers would still have flex time, would still telework where appropriate, and where constituents—our bosses, the American people—could access the services that they pay for and deserve to get because they do pay for them.

Mr. Chair, I urge support of this soon-to-be bipartisan bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

The amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, printed in the bill, shall be considered as adopted. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as read.

The text of the bill, as amended, is as follows:

H.R. 6276

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 "Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act of 2023" or the "USE IT Act of 2023".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

(a) *IN GENERAL.—In this Act:*

(1) *ACTUAL UTILIZATION RATE.—The term "actual utilization rate" means the total usable square footage of a public building or federally-leased space divided by the occupancy.*

(2) *ADMINISTRATOR.—The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of General Services.*

(3) *BUILDING UTILIZATION.—The term "building utilization" means the percentage of utilization generated by comparing the actual utilization rate with the capacity based on a utilization benchmark of 150 useable square feet per person.*

(4) *CAPACITY.—The term "capacity" means the total usable square footage of a public building or federally-leased space divided by a utilization benchmark.*

(5) *DIRECTOR.—The term "Director" means the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.*

(6) *FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term "Federal agency" means an executive department covered by the CFO Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-576).*

(7) *OCCUPANCY.—The term "occupancy" means the total number of employees performing duties in person in a public building or federally-leased space at least 5 days per week on a regular basis.*

SEC. 3. IDENTIFICATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF BUILDING USAGE TECHNOLOGY.

(a) *IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator, in coordination with the Director, shall establish standard methodologies and identify technologies available for measuring occupancy in public buildings and federally-leased space.*

(b) *MEASUREMENT OF UTILIZATION.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the heads of Federal agencies shall work with the Administrator to identify, deploy, and use sensors and other technologies in public buildings and federally-leased space, where the Federal agency occupies space to measure the occupancy of public buildings and leased space.*

SEC. 4. REPORTING ON USAGE OF REAL PROPERTY.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the heads of Federal agencies shall submit to the Director, the Administrator, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on—

(1) *the occupancy and the actual utilization rates of space in public buildings and federally-leased space occupied by the respective agency of the Federal agency head broken down by building and lease;*

(2) *the methodology used for determining occupancy, including the period of time and other parameters used to determine occupancy on a regular basis;*

(3) *the utilization percentage of each public building and federally-leased space by the respective agency of the Federal agency head, comparing the capacity to the actual utilization rate based on a utilization benchmark of 150 useable square feet per person; and*

(4) *any costs associated with capacity that exceeds occupancy with respect to the respective agency of the Federal agency head.*

SEC. 5. REDUCING UNNEEDED SPACE.

(a) *TARGET UTILIZATION METRICS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Director, in consultation with the Administrator, shall ensure building utilization in each public building and federally-leased space is not less than 60 percent on average over each 1-year period.*

(b) *ACTIONS.—In the event that building utilization is below 60 percent on average over a 1-year period described in subsection (a) for any particular public building or federally-leased space, the Administrator shall—*

(1) *provide notice to the tenant agency informing such agency of the excess in capacity along with associated costs of such excess; and*

(2) *notify the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate of such excess capacity and associated costs.*

(c) *SUBSEQUENT FAILURE.—If the tenant agency fails to meet the 60 percent target under subsection (a) in the reporting period subsequent to the reporting period under subsection (b), the Administrator shall, in consultation with the Director, take steps to reduce the space of the tenant agency, including consolidating the tenant agency with another agency, selling or disposing of excess capacity space, and adjusting space requirements, as appropriate, for any replacement space.*

(d) *PRIORITIZATION.—The Administrator, in coordination with the Director, shall prioritize to the maximum extent practicable capital investments in public buildings where Federal agencies meet or exceed building utilization metrics, except that prioritization may be given to projects that will result in building utilization of 60 percent or more.*

(e) *EXCEPTIONS.—*

(1) *IN GENERAL.—The Director may provide exceptions to building utilization metrics based on the amount of non-standard office space a Federal agency demonstrates is required to meet the mission of the agency, including warehouse space, laboratories critical to the mission of the agency, and public customer-facing spaces driven by agency missions.*

(2) *REPORTING.—The Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on any exceptions granted, including the justification for such exception.*

SEC. 6. HEADQUARTERS BUILDINGS.

(a) *HEADQUARTERS CONSOLIDATIONS.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director, in consultation with the Administrator, shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and the Comptroller General of the United States a plan to consolidate department and agency headquarters buildings in the National Capital Region that will result in building utilizations of 60 percent or greater.*

(b) *CONTENTS.—The plan submitted under subsection (a) shall include details on the following:*

(1) *Which departments and agencies will collocate and consolidate and into which buildings and associated details before and after plan implementation related to building utilization, building capacities, and actual utilization.*

(2) *Details on the strategies for the sale or disposal of buildings that will no longer be needed for Federal use.*

(3) *A detailed breakdown of any costs associated with the proposed consolidations and collocations.*

(4) *An estimate of future savings as a result of space reductions and consolidations, including costs associated with energy savings and building operations.*

(c) *IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 1 year after the submission of the plan under subsection (a), the Administrator and Director shall begin implementing such plan.*

The Acting CHAIR. No further amendment to the bill, as amended,

shall be in order except those printed in House Report 118-419. Each such further amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, by the Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. EDWARDS

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 1 printed in House Report 118-419.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 9, after line 5, insert the following:

SEC. 7. FEDERAL USE IT OR LOSE IT LEASES ACT.

(a) **REPORTING OF SPACE UTILIZATION AND OCCUPANCY DATA FOR OFFICE SPACE.**—An occupancy agreement between the Administrator of General Services and a Federal tenant for office space shall—

(1) include language that requires the Federal tenant to submit to the Administrator an annual report for the duration of the agreement containing data on—

(A) monthly total occupancy of such office space;

(B) the actual utilization of such office space;

(C) monthly space utilization rates; and

(D) any other office space utilization data considered important by the Administrator; and

(2) include language that requires the Federal tenant to have written procedures in place governing the return of office space to the Administrator if the occupancy of the Federal tenant falls below a 60 percent space utilization rate for 6 months within any 1-year period, beginning on the date on which the agreement takes effect.

(b) **REQUIREMENTS FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES WITH INDEPENDENT LEASING AUTHORITIES.**—The head of any agency with independent leasing authorities with leases for office space shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and each congressional committee of jurisdiction of the applicable independent leasing authority an annual report for the duration of such agreement containing data on—

(1) monthly total occupancy of the office space;

(2) the actual utilization of such office space;

(3) monthly space utilization rates; and

(4) any other office space utilization data considered important for collection by Congress.

(c) **EXCEPTIONS TO REPORTING AND OCCUPANCY AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS.**—This section shall not apply to properties used by an element of the intelligence community.

(d) **APPLICABILITY.**—The requirements of this section shall apply to any occupancy or novation agreement entered into on or after the date that is 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act.

(e) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **FEDERAL TENANT.**—The term “Federal tenant”—

(A) means an Federal agency that has an occupancy agreement with the Administrator of General Services to occupy a com-

mercial lease for office space secured by the Administrator on behalf of the Federal Government; and

(B) does not include an element of the intelligence community.

(2) **INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY.**—The term “intelligence community” has the meaning given that term in section 3 of the National Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3003).

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. EDWARDS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chair, I commend Mr. PERRY for his work on this important bill. I had the opportunity to serve on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, where this horrible expense issue was brought to our attention.

I also thank the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. PEREZ), my bipartisan co-lead, for her partnership on this amendment and the greater standalone bill.

Mr. Chair, I am here today to urge support for my amendment to H.R. 6276, the USE IT Act.

□ 1445

I introduced the Federal Use it or Lose it Leases Act, or the FULL Act, back in November to bring accountability to the practice of maintaining high telework levels while maintaining expensive office leases and to reduce wasteful government spending on unused office space.

My bill was drafted in concurrence with Mr. PERRY’s USE IT Act to ensure that our language was synonymous and could work together to establish strong Federal building policies and procedures to reduce the Federal footprint. The FULL Act unanimously passed out of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee by voice vote during the full committee markup on November 15.

As you well know, a GAO report found that 17 of the 24 major agency headquarters in D.C. were less than 25 percent occupied during the first quarter of 2023. Even the few agencies above 25 percent reported right around or below 50 percent occupancy. Meanwhile, taxpayers continue to pay for 100 percent of the office space Federal employees are not using.

The Federal real estate portfolio has become a wasteland that is seldom reviewed. Leased assets cost taxpayers more than \$6 billion a year. Even during the peak of telework, between 2020 and 2022, Federal agencies managed to spend more than \$1 billion in a single year on new furnishings.

If you compare the USE IT Act and my amendment, you will see our language is very similar. Mr. PERRY’s USE IT Act establishes the criteria that I reference in my amendment to regulate general Federal building practices. My bill differentiates itself by serving as the reporting catalyst for Mr. PERRY’s bill.

The USE IT Act creates mandatory reporting requirements for agencies, and the FULL Act will require that GSA include language in all leases with Federal tenants directing the submission of an annual report on monthly occupancy and inclusion of written procedures governing the return of that unused office space to GSA. Together, the language ensures Congress has up-to-date information to make the best space utilization decisions for our taxpayers.

The FULL Act also requires independent leasing authorities to submit a report to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and the congressional committee of jurisdiction on occupancy and space utilization.

Ultimately, my amendment seeks to equip Congress and GSA with the data needed to provide greater oversight of Federal leases, to reduce the Federal real estate footprint, and to ensure that we are maximizing every Federal dollar spent on office space for agency use. Mr. PERRY’s bill sets the best practices for managing Federal real estate, and my amendment provides the mechanism for implementing those best practices.

Ultimately, Mr. Chair, I urge support of my amendment, which will help to strengthen congressional oversight of government spending on office leases and prevent taxpayers from continuing to foot the bill for underutilized Federal office space.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, this amendment requires GSA to include in its occupancy agreements with Federal tenants a requirement that tenant agencies submit a report on utilization and usage to GSA. It also requires the return of office space by the tenant to GSA if occupancy falls below 60 percent for 6 months within any 1-year period.

GSA previously allowed tenant agencies to return unneeded space back to GSA with 120-days’ notice, but in May of 2023, GSA changed its policy and now all new occupancy agreements between GSA and Federal tenants must include a noncancellation clause to prevent agencies from returning space to GSA.

Requiring agencies to return space if occupancy falls below 60 percent for 6 months does not account for the fact that space costs incurred by the government still remain under the lease contract.

While I have concerns about the mechanics and the cost of an agency returning space to GSA with this amendment, I will not oppose this amendment.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. Chair, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Washington State (Ms. PEREZ).

Ms. PEREZ. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of my amendment with Representative EDWARDS for the USE IT Act which would incorporate our bipartisan bill, the FULL Act, to inform how Federal office leases are renewed and ensure unused government office space can be effectively repurposed.

Flexibility in where Federal employees work has allowed public servants to spend more time coaching their kids' Little League team and less time commuting in traffic. In addition, telework has been beneficial to rural communities like mine.

However, Federal policy needs to keep up so taxpayers aren't footing the bill for empty office space. We want to see our tax dollars going to fixing aging infrastructure in our public schools, not to landlords.

With more than half of all Federal leases set to expire in the next 5 years, our FULL Act would help the government better utilize space and cut down on expensive building leases and furniture.

Our amendment will require important reporting on space utilization, occupancy, and availability, as well as ensuring agencies have written procedures in place to return unused office space to the GSA.

Instead of wasting tax dollars on empty buildings and their landlords, we should be using them to replace our crumbling infrastructure.

I am grateful for Congressman EDWARDS' partnership on this bipartisan, commonsense effort to reduce government waste and be responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The time of the gentleman from North Carolina has expired.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, again, I do not oppose the amendment on this side of the aisle, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. EDWARDS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. PERRY

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 2 printed in House Report 118-419.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 4, strike lines 4 through 7 and insert the following:

(7) OCCUPANCY.—The term “occupancy” means the total number of employees actually performing duties in person in a public building or federally-leased space 40 hours per week regardless of work arrangements.

Page 4, after line 21, insert the following:

(c) PROTECTION OF PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION.—In carrying out subsection (b), the Administrator shall ensure any sensors used for the purposes of determining occupancy are designed to protect of all personally identifiable information.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chair, I am pleased to offer this bipartisan amendment to H.R. 6276 with the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. AUCHINCLOSS). This amendment makes two clarifying changes to the bill, ensuring that the legislation collects occupancy data in a way that better encompasses all Federal workers, wherever they are working, and protects the privacy of those workers.

This amendment updates the definition of “occupancy” in the bill from the total number of employees performing duties in person over a 5-day workweek to the number of employees doing so over a 40-hour workweek, ensuring that occupancy calculations can more comprehensively account for all employees.

Now, the issue came up during discussion in regular order in the committee. Mr. AUCHINCLOSS had some issues with the bill, and rightly so. He came to me, and he said: Can we work on this? I said: Sure, I think we can because we are all interested in making things better, no matter where the ideas come from.

Additionally, this amendment requires that the sensors used to collect occupancy data within this bill are designed to protect the personally identifiable information of the building's occupants, ensuring that these new requirements will not impinge and impose on Federal employee privacy.

It has been great to work with the gentleman. We all want to improve things. We all think we have the best ideas, but sometimes we don't, and when somebody else does, you have just got to say, well, look, can we get it done together? If that brings us together, that is a win for the American people and, quite honestly, a win for this Congress if we can work on the amendment, get it passed and also the bill.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. AUCHINCLOSS).

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of my amendment

with Mr. PERRY to his bill, the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies, or USE IT, Act.

I support the intent and much of the substance of the underlying bill. I believe it is wise to require the Federal Government to be a good steward of its leases and of taxpayer dollars. It is important to reevaluate employee occupancy of Federal buildings in this new post-COVID employment environment, just as the private sector is doing, and to rightsize our Federal office space accordingly.

This amendment makes two important revisions to the bill. I appreciate Mr. PERRY's collaboration in adopting it.

First, it defines occupancy in terms of hours per week instead of days per week to better reflect Federal employees who have compressed work schedules. Second, it codifies that any technology used to collect occupancy data should protect personally identifiable information, which GSA is already doing.

This amendment does not solve every outstanding issue with this bill. I agree with the ranking member that Ms. TITUS' amendment should also have been made in order, but I do believe it materially improves it, and I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chair, again, trying to alleviate the fact that a vast majority of the buildings are vastly understaffed, yet 100 percent of them are paid for, that is what we are trying to do here. It has been a 20-year-long problem—20 years long. The Obama administration recognized it and tried to do something about it. Of course, GSA wants to do something about it. Again, the tenants, the occupants of the buildings, the agencies have no incentive to reduce their space. They would be happy to have all the space and have nobody in it except when they feel like showing up as long as the taxpayer is willing to pay for an empty building, well heated, well cared for, well maintained, just in case they might use it.

Now, we have told the Rules Committee that we want to see all the amendments that are worthy to be listened to be debated and come to the floor for a vote because we think that improving ideas, no matter where they come from, is the greatest thing for this institution and for this effort.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this amendment that I worked on with my good friend, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, my biggest concern with the underlying bill is that it defines occupancy as the total number of employees physically working from the offices at least 5 days a week. Many Federal employees do not actually sit at their desks at all because they are out in the field working.

As the bill is currently written, these employees—as well as Federal employees who have approved alternative work schedules—would not be included

in occupancy counts. This amendment makes a slight improvement to that definition, as was explained by the Representative from Massachusetts.

The effort to count occupants in buildings is worthwhile, but only if we ensure that all occupants, including those who have been sanctioned and approved with their alternative work schedules, are included.

This amendment will improve the bill, and I thank the Representative from Pennsylvania and the Representative from Massachusetts for their efforts.

Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PERRY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MS. HAGEMAN

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 3 printed in part A of House Report 118-419.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 5, line 18, strike "and".

Page 5, line 21, strike the period and insert "; and".

Page 5, after line 21, insert the following:

(5) whether occupancy and actual utilization rates are affected by the remote work and telework policies and practices of the respective agency.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the gentleman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wyoming.

□ 1500

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in favor of my amendment No. 3 to H.R. 6276, which expands on the bill's reporting requirements to have the Federal agencies also evaluate whether occupancy and utilization rates are affected by the agency's remote and telework policies.

The underlying bill, as drafted, requires Federal agencies and the General Services Administration, or GSA, to measure and report on occupancy and utilization in public buildings and federally leased spaces.

My amendment builds on this reporting requirement and forces the agencies to measure how telework and remote work impacts the utilization of its physical office space.

Telework and remote work have long been available to the Federal workforce, but the wide scale and regular use of such policies drastically increased during COVID.

Two priorities of this majority have been to return the Federal workforce to work and to understand how remote and telework impacted the efficiency of the Federal Government and the

services it is required to provide to our constituents.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability under the leadership of Chairmen COMER and SESSIONS have done great work to accomplish this goal.

Mr. PERRY's bill and other bills reported by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee measuring the usage of Federal office space make further meaningful steps in achieving the goals of this majority.

Yet, the agencies have been anything but fully transparent. My amendment seeks to build on this great work by requiring that the agencies measure the new age of remote and telework on the usage of physical government space.

With telework and remote work so widely used in 2024, any study on the usage of office space would be incomplete without measuring it against the number of employees which only sometimes or never have to physically report to work.

This would help Congress understand how much of the Federal office spaces are actually being used on a regular basis in the post-COVID world, which would also help us to determine if we need to divest of physical office space to save taxpayers' dollars and streamline the Federal Government.

Mr. Chair, I urge all my colleagues to support my amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, section 4 of H.R. 6276 requires the heads of Federal agencies to submit to the Office of Management and Budget and the General Services Administration and Congress a report on the usage of real property.

The amendment that the Representative from Wyoming offers expands the reporting requirement by including the telework and remote work practices of the agency and the impact those policies have on utilization rates and buildings occupied by the respective agency.

It certainly would be helpful for Congress to have a clearer picture of these policies and practices across the government.

Mr. Chair, I support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Chairman, I again urge my colleagues to support the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MS. HAGEMAN

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 4 printed in of House Report 118-419.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 4, line 18, insert ", Personal Identity Verification badge swipe data isolating only the first credential use of the day for each cardholder," after "sensors".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the gentleman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wyoming.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in favor of amendment No. 4 to H.R. 6276 which clarifies that the General Services Administration, or GSA, should use PIV badge swipe data isolating the first credentialed use of the day for each cardholder as a tool to measure utilization of Federal office space.

The bill, as currently drafted, explicitly directs GSA to use sensors and other technologies in public buildings and federally leased space to measure occupancy and utilization.

The GSA states that occupancy data has proven to be a vital tool for agencies to accurately evaluate space utilization and to manage property accordingly.

As part of this effort, the GSA is piloting occupancy data collection technologies. Another method GSA uses is badge swipe data which relies on Personal Identity Verification or PIV card swipe data at building access points.

PIV data is broken down into unique credentials and isolated to the first usage of the day. In short, it uses a Federal worker's PIV card to check attendance at the door.

My amendment would clarify that badge swipe data is and should be a tool GSA uses as part of the measurement of office utilization space.

While occupancy sensors measure the utilization of specific rooms, according to the GSA, badge swipe data can provide a historic daily count of the number of unique credential individuals in a space or building, daily building density based on square foot per person, and annual rent per person occupying the space.

This is absolutely the type of data we need to achieve the outcomes of the underlying bill.

The collection of the daily attendance to each Federal office building, which is then reported to Congress, will also help further our majority's goal to measure the impact of agencies' telework and remote work policies.

Again, my amendment is simply to clarify that this important data collection technology that GSA is piloting is utilized to the extent it can be in this

mission to measure usage of government office space.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, section 3 of H.R. 6276 requires the heads of Federal agencies to work with the Administrator of General Services to identify, deploy, and use sensors and other technologies to measure the occupancies of Federal buildings.

The amendment from the Representative from Wyoming will require that Personal Identity Verification badge swipe data should also be used but only capture the first credentialed use of the day for each cardholder.

Ensuring that each person is counted one time—not every time they may leave and return—would provide accurate representation of building utilization and meet the goals of Congress to better assess the use of Federal office space.

Mr. Chair, I support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Chairman, just one final statement. This amendment is to clarify that Congress intends for GSA to use all occupancy data collection techniques.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. MCCORMICK

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 5 printed in House Report 118-419.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Strike section 4 and insert the following:

SEC. 4. REPORTING ON USAGE OF REAL PROPERTY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the heads of Federal agencies shall submit to the Director, the Administrator, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate, and the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report on—

(1) the occupancy and the actual utilization rates of space in public buildings and federally-leased space occupied by the re-

spective agency of the Federal agency head broken down by building and lease;

(2) the methodology used for determining occupancy, including the period of time and other parameters used to determine occupancy on a regular basis;

(3) the utilization percentage of each public building and federally-leased space by the respective agency of the Federal agency head, comparing the capacity to the actual utilization rate based on a utilization benchmark of 150 usable square feet per person; and

(4) any costs associated with capacity that exceeds occupancy with respect to the respective agency of the Federal agency head.

(b) PUBLISHING REQUIREMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the heads of Federal agencies shall make each report required under subsection (a) available on a publicly accessible website of the General Services Administration.

(2) EXCEPTION.—The publishing requirements of paragraph (1) shall not apply if the head of the respective Federal agency makes a determination that making the report required under subsection (a) available on a publicly accessible website would be detrimental to national security.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. MCCORMICK) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Mr. Chair, I rise to offer my amendment to H.R. 6276, the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies Act, or the USE IT Act of 2023.

My amendment is simple. It would amend section 4 of the bill to make the reports required by section be made publicly available on a website operated by the General Services Administration, the GSA, with exceptions for national security-related reasons.

The American people deserve transparency. Far too often, the people of this country, the ones who fund the government, the ones we represent, don't know where their money is going. Taxpayer dollars are frivolously being used to heat and cool empty and underutilized government buildings.

The American people see tens of thousands of dollars go out of their paychecks every year to pay for what: A wide open southern border, rampant inflation, out-of-control national debt, and an inefficient bureaucracy.

This is ridiculous. The people deserve to know their money is being used efficiently. Making these reports on office use publicly available will increase public oversight on the activities of the Federal agencies and, in turn, increase public trust and confidence in our government.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, the amendment offered by the Representative from Georgia requires some significant reporting on occupancy, utilization rates, and costs by the heads of Federal agencies to the Office of Management and Budget, the General Services Administration, and Congress.

Information gathering and transparency is vital to efficient and effective governing, so I will not oppose the amendment.

I do want to point out, however, that agency heads are already required to report occupancy and utilization data, and that data can be found on GSA's annual performance overview reports on GSA's website that the public can access now.

Mr. Chair, I will not oppose the amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Mr. Chair, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Chair, my amendment is simple, easy, and commonsense. I ask for my colleagues to support this amendment and to support the underlying bill.

Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I have no other speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. MCCORMICK).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 6 OFFERED BY MR. MCCORMICK

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 6 printed in House Report 118-410.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Mr. Chair, I rise as the designee of Mr. MILLS, and I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 9, after line 5, insert the following:

SEC. 7. GAO REPORT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the cost to each Federal agency of measuring the occupancy and actual utilization rates of space in public buildings and federally-leased space to prepare the reports required under section 4.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—The Comptroller General shall include in the report required under subsection (a) the cost of deploying sensors and technologies pursuant to section 3 but shall exclude any such technologies that were in place before the date of enactment of this Act.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. MCCORMICK) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Mr. Chair, I am here today to offer amendment No. 6 to H.R. 6276, USE IT Act, as the designee of the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLS).

I fully support the accountability advanced by the underlying bill. The continual bloating of the Federal Government's physical footprint costs American taxpayers obscene amounts of money each year.

This straightforward amendment provides additional transparency to the bill to ensure that Congress and the American people have the most full-some data about the costs associated with this bill's implementation.

Specifically, this amendment requires the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, to report on the cost of establishing future methodologies and technologies to measure Federal building occupancy as required by the bill.

The enactment excludes any pre-existing systems in place before the date of the enactment of this act to prevent any duplicative accounting.

As we strive to limit waste, fraud, and abuse in our government, this amendment ensures that we are doing so with transparency and accountability in Federal building management.

This bill and the amendment to it are hardly riveting. However, good governance often requires a willingness to do the mundane administrative work to keep the ship upright and moving forward.

I will take a second just to say that I wish Mr. MILLS could have been here to offer this important amendment, but he is currently on his way back from Haiti, after assisting with the evacuation of American citizens as the country enters a state of complete anarchy. His commitment to America, domestic and broad, is commendable.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, section 4 of H.R. 6276 requires the heads of Federal agencies to submit to the Office of Management and Budget, the General Services Administration, and Congress a report on the usage of real property.

The amendment offered by the Representative from Georgia for the Representative from Florida requires the Government Accountability Office to report to Congress on the costs to Federal agencies associated with complying with section 4 of the underlying bill.

The GAO's report must include the cost of Federal agencies of surveying, monitoring, and deploying sensors and technologies to measure the occupancy and actual utilization rates of space in public buildings and space leased by the Federal Government.

Mr. Chair, I support this amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McCORMICK. Mr. Chair, just like the last amendment, this amendment is about transparency and accountability. Once again, I ask for my colleagues' support on this amendment and on the underlying bill. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, we have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. McCORMICK). The amendment was agreed to.

□ 1515

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. ROSE

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 7 printed in House Report 118-419.

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 9, after line 5, insert the following:
SEC. 7. INVESTIGATION OF UNDERUTILIZED SPACE.

(a) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the submission of each report under section 4, the head of each Federal agency shall submit to the inspector general of each respective agency a report detailing any public building or federally-leased space with a capacity of 500 or more employees under the jurisdiction of such agency that has a utilization rate below 20 percent during the reporting period that is not a vacant office building.

(b) INSPECTOR GENERAL INVESTIGATION.—Upon receipt of a report under subsection (a), the inspector general of the relevant Federal agency shall conduct an investigation to determine whether there is any evidence of fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement with respect to the use of the public building or federally-leased space identified in the report.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROSE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chair, I rise in support of my amendment to H.R. 6276, the USE IT Act. The USE IT Act is a commonsense bill that requires a report on the occupancy and actual utilization rates of public buildings and federally leased spaces occupied by Federal agencies.

The report must also list any costs to taxpayers associated with capacity that exceeds occupancy.

The USE IT Act also requires the government to sell or dispose of excess capacity space or consolidate space in buildings with a utilization rate below 60 percent.

Mr. Chair, Tennesseans are rightfully outraged that their taxpayer dollars are paying for mostly empty Federal buildings.

Many of the folks I represent show up to work every day to put food on the table, care for their community, or

teach and train the next generation of leaders. However, for some reason, those in Washington and around this country who collect a check from their taxpayer-funded job believe showing up for work is no longer necessary. They are mistaken.

In a report on the USE IT Act issued by the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, the committee noted that according to a recent Government Accountability Office, or GAO, report, 17 of the 24 agency headquarters in GAO's review were at 25 percent or less utilization.

The GAO report also noted that some agency headquarters had as low as 9 percent space utilization—9 percent.

Mr. Chair, think of it this way: A Federal building with an occupancy of 1,000 may only have 90 people working in it on any given workday. That is just ridiculous, frankly.

That is why I have offered my amendment, which would build upon the underlying bill by specifically requiring that Federal agencies report to inspectors general any large public building or federally leased spaces with a capacity of 500 employees or more and a utilization rate below 20 percent during the reporting period in the underlying bill.

My amendment excludes vacant office buildings.

Any large building or federally leased space identified would be forwarded to the relevant inspector general to conduct an investigation to determine whether there is any evidence of fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement.

It is simple, Mr. Chair. If a building meant for more than 500 people is being utilized less than 20 percent, the inspector general must investigate whether there is fraud, waste, and mismanagement taking place.

It is unfortunate that although many large Federal office buildings are operating at frighteningly low occupancy rates, Federal agencies are not taking steps to increase building utilization rates, actions to reduce their footprint, or any meaningful movements to reduce the operating costs of these empty office spaces despite repeated warnings from Congress to do so.

It is imperative that inspectors general investigate whether waste, fraud, and mismanagement is taking place in these buildings that aren't being utilized to ensure that we are spending taxpayer dollars wisely.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support my amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, the amendment offered by the Representative from Tennessee requires the heads of Federal agencies to

submit a report to the inspector general of each respective agency on buildings under the agency's jurisdiction that has capacity for 500 or more employees that has a 20 percent utilization rate or less.

Upon receipt of the report, the relevant inspector general is to investigate evidence of fraud, abuse, or mismanagement.

Now, I will say this, I don't know why this amendment is necessary. I understand the Federal real estate has been on the General Accounting Office's High-Risk list for years, but nowhere in GAO's reporting were there claims of fraud, abuse, or mismanagement. Even though this is only a reporting requirement, requiring the inspector general of every Federal agency to investigate could be a waste of time and resources.

This amendment seems to be a solution chasing a problem, but I will not oppose it.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROSE. Mr. Chair, I have no further speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Chair, thankfully, the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are passed us. However, most Federal agencies have not adjusted to this post-pandemic period, which is reflected in the deserted Federal office buildings throughout our country.

I hope all Members will support this effort to bring greater transparency and accountability to large Federal buildings and federally leased spaces with low utilization rates by supporting my amendment and the underlying bill.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on my amendment, "yes" on the underlying bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chair, I will close on this amendment by briefly speaking to the broader bill. The goal that we share in Congress is to ensure that Congress, the General Services Administration, the agencies all adjust to the post-COVID life that we have in Federal real estate, that we are rightsizing Federal real estate, and that we get rid of the office space we don't need and use the office space that we do need.

This amendment is an attempt to do that. I certainly will not oppose it, but I do ask folks to consider it.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROSE).

The amendment was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. There being no further amendments, under the rule, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Ms. DE LA CRUZ) having assumed the chair, Mr. MOYLAN, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Com-

mittee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 6276) to direct the Administrator of General Services and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to identify the utilization rate of certain public buildings and federally-leased space, and for other purposes, and, pursuant to House Resolution 1071, he reported the bill, as amended by that resolution, back to the House with sundry further amendments adopted in the Committee of the Whole.

Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any further amendment reported from the Committee of the Whole? If not, the Chair will put them en gros.

The amendments were agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 1(c) of rule XIX, further consideration of H.R. 6276 is postponed.

DENOUNCING THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S IMMIGRATION POLICIES

Mr. FRY. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1071, I call up the resolution (H. Res. 1065) denouncing the Biden administration's immigration policies, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1071, the resolution is considered read.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1065

Whereas President Joe Biden and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas have created the worst border security crisis in the Nation's history;

Whereas President Biden, beginning on day one of his administration, systematically dismantled effective border security measures and interior immigration enforcement;

Whereas the Biden administration's open-borders policies have incentivized nearly 9,300,000 illegal aliens from all around the world, including criminal aliens and suspected terrorists, to arrive at the southwest border;

Whereas the Biden administration has allowed at least 6,300,000 illegal aliens from the southwest border to travel to American communities;

Whereas current immigration law allows for the United States to enter into asylum cooperative agreements with other countries to allow for the removal of certain aliens seeking asylum in the United States;

Whereas asylum cooperative agreements provide the United States with another tool to reduce the incentives for illegal immigration;

Whereas asylum cooperative agreements increase cooperation with United States allies in the Western Hemisphere and around the world and promote shared responsibility;

Whereas the previous administration announced asylum cooperative agreements with El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras;

Whereas the Biden administration suspended and terminated these asylum cooperative agreements as part of its open-borders agenda that has encouraged mass illegal immigration to the southwest border;

Whereas the Biden administration retains the ability to negotiate asylum cooperative agreements with those countries but has refused to do so, despite historic illegal immigration at the southwest border;

Whereas the Immigration and Nationality Act mandates that the Secretary of Homeland Security detain inadmissible aliens arriving at the border who express an intention to apply for asylum or fear of persecution;

Whereas the Immigration and Nationality Act mandates that the Secretary of Homeland Security detain, during removal proceedings, aliens who arrive at the border and are found to be inadmissible;

Whereas the Biden administration has purposely violated United States immigration law by refusing to detain inadmissible aliens arriving at the border;

Whereas, the Biden administration could comply with the mandatory detention statutes of the Immigration and Nationality Act;

Whereas the Biden administration's purposeful violation of the mandatory detention statutes of the Immigration and Nationality Act has resulted in the mass release of millions of illegal aliens into United States communities;

Whereas current immigration law allows for inadmissible aliens to be expeditiously removed from the United States once encountered at the border unless they establish a credible fear of persecution;

Whereas the Biden administration has released millions of illegal aliens into the United States without even processing them for expedited removal to be screened for asylum eligibility;

Whereas, of the 5,600,000 illegal alien encounters from January 20, 2021, through August 31, 2023, the Department of Homeland Security placed only 6.8 percent of those illegal aliens into expedited removal proceedings to even be screened for asylum eligibility;

Whereas, of the illegal aliens who were not found to have a credible fear of persecution, roughly 40 percent were not removed and remained in the United States as of August 31, 2023;

Whereas, of the illegal aliens who were processed for expedited removal and who did not even attempt to make a claim for asylum, the Biden administration cannot confirm removal or return from the United States for nearly a third of those illegal aliens;

Whereas the Biden administration could expand expedited removal to more quickly remove illegal aliens at the border and screen more illegal aliens for asylum eligibility instead of mass releasing them into the United States;

Whereas the Biden administration's limited use of expedited removal only incentivizes illegal immigration and worsens the border crisis;

Whereas, despite its effectiveness, the Biden administration terminated the Migrant Protection Protocols;

Whereas the Biden administration has purposely violated United States immigration law by abusing discretionary case-by-case and other parole authorities to mass parole illegal aliens who would otherwise have no legal basis to enter and remain in the United States;

Whereas the Biden administration's proposed solution to the border crisis failed to address catch-and-release valves such as the Flores Settlement Agreement and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization