

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. 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. 5770, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my colleague Mr. NEGUSE's bipartisan bill, which reauthorizes the Federal priority streamgages and the national groundwater resources monitoring programs through fiscal year 2028 at existing funding levels.

The USGS operates and maintains a nationwide streamgaging network, which monitors the amount of water flowing through streams and rivers across the country at any given point in time. Data from this network is used by public and private users, including government agencies responsible for water management and emergency responses, utilities, environmental agencies, and recreational interests. This data informs Americans on whether conditions are safe for fishing, boating, or rafting.

Additionally, the national groundwater resources monitoring program administers a network of water-level wells and water-quality wells. The USGS makes this data publicly available through the National Groundwater Monitoring Network data portal. Given the groundwater is managed by individual States, this data enables States, stakeholders, and individuals to make decisions using the best available science.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Representative NEGUSE's H.R. 5770, the WATER Data Improvement Act.

The WATER Data Improvement Act represents a bipartisan approach to ensuring that water resource managers have the data they need to provide communities and the environment with access to safe, clean water.

The legislation will promote successful drought resiliency strategies, strengthen essential programs, and increase water quality by reauthorizing the U.S. Geological Survey's national groundwater resources monitoring network, its Federal priority streamgage network, and improved water estimation, measurement, and monitoring grant funding through 2028.

The impacts of these programs and grants have been transformative. The national groundwater resources monitoring network brings together Federal, State, local, and Tribal agencies' groundwater monitoring efforts while the Federal priority streamgage net-

work measures streamflow information to promote access to crucial groundwater and streamflow data for water resource managers. The legislation would also provide grants to develop, improve, and implement new methodologies and technologies for collecting, analyzing, and delivering water resource data.

With 2024 on track to be the hottest year on record and many communities throughout the West facing a historic drought crisis, it is imperative that we provide water resource managers with the tools that they need to collect and provide accurate data to develop and implement innovative water management and conservation plans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on the WATER Data Improve Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. NEGUSE), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. NEGUSE. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, my gratitude to the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. LEE), my distinguished colleague, for her leadership on this particular issue, her leadership in the Colorado River Caucus over the course of these last several years as the Upper Basin and Lower Basin States grapple with a historic drought, as was articulated.

I could not say it any better than she did as to the bipartisan approach that she and others are championing here in the United States Congress. I am proud to add this particular piece of legislation to that approach. Of course, my gratitude to Chairman WESTERMAN and Ranking Member GRIJALVA for their consideration of this important bill.

I have the honor and the privilege of representing the great State of Colorado in the United States Congress, and the headwaters of the Colorado River are in my district. In Colorado, we know how important it is to preserve, protect, and strengthen these critical water resources and how important data is to that effort, which is why this bill is so important.

As has been explained by both the chairman and Representative LEE, the Federal priority streamgage network is a federally funded network of streamgages to measure streamflow information for forecasting, flood and drought planning, water-quality monitoring, and more. The national groundwater resources monitoring network is a collaborative network that serves a similar purpose.

At the end of the day, the improved water estimation, measurement, and monitoring technologies programs provide grants to develop and implement new technologies and methodologies to measure water resources data. Each of these programs, I can certainly tell you, Mr. Speaker, is a valuable source

of information for water users across the State of Colorado, across the Upper Basin States, the Lower Basin States, and, indeed, across the Rocky Mountain West.

It is critical these efforts be supported and authorized, which is why I am proud to sponsor this important bipartisan legislation.

It is a simple bill, a noncontroversial bill, one that I hope will earn the support of every Member of this august body, and I certainly look forward, after the House has considered it, to getting it across the finish line with our partners in the Senate, Senator LUMMIS and Senator HICKENLOOPER, of course, from the great State of Colorado.

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

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, the bill before us today reauthorizes programs that provide data and inform real-time decisionmaking and long-term planning. The USGS water data is fundamental to national and local economies, protection of life and property, and effective management of our Nation's water resources.

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I know personally in Arkansas if I want to go float on the Nation's first wild and scenic river, the Buffalo National River, the first thing I do is go online and look at the data from the USGS water gauges to determine where the best place is to float. This data is used all across the country in many different ways.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Congressman NEGUSE's work on the legislation, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5770, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5770, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REMOVAL OF RESTRICTION ON AMENDMENTS TO OR MODIFICATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF AMERICAN SAMOA

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6062) to restore the ability of the people of American Samoa to approve amendments to the territorial constitution based on majority rule in a democratic act of self-determination, as authorized pursuant to an Act of Congress delegating administration of Federal territorial law in the territory

to the President, and to the Secretary of the Interior under Executive Order 10264, dated June 29, 1951, under which the Constitution of American Samoa was approved and may be amended without requirement for further congressional action, subject to the authority of Congress under the Territorial Clause in article IV, section 3, clause 2 of the United States Constitution.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6062

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

SECTION 1. REMOVAL OF RESTRICTION ON AMENDMENTS TO OR MODIFICATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF AMERICAN SAMOA.

Section 12 of Public Law 98-213 (48 U.S.C. 1662a) is repealed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. LEE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 6062, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 6062, sponsored by Delegate RADEWAGEN, aims to improve the amendment process for the Constitution of American Samoa. I appreciate Delegate RADEWAGEN's work on this bill and her tireless efforts to represent the needs and views of American Samoa.

H.R. 6062 would repeal section 12 of Public Law 98-213, which requires any amendments or modifications to the Constitution of American Samoa, as approved by the Secretary of the Interior, to be made only by an Act of Congress. This law was enacted in 1983 when there was concern among American Samoans about the Department of the Interior making unilateral amendments to the Constitution of American Samoa. The change in Federal law ensured Congress would step in if the DOI attempted to make such amendments.

These concerns proved to be unfounded, and since 1984, American Samoa has made attempts to return to the previous policy of Department of the Interior Secretarial approval. Many now believe the current congressional approval requirement has stalled American Samoa's constitutional amendment process.

H.R. 6062 would revert American Samoa's constitutional amendment process to the pre-1983 status quo by requiring

approval from the Secretary of the Interior for amendments to the Constitution of American Samoa.

I would like to note that Congress will retain authority over American Samoa as provided by the Territorial Clause of the United States Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6062, which is sponsored by our colleague from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN).

This bill would eliminate the requirement for Congress to approve changes to the American Samoan Constitution in addition to the Secretary of the Interior.

When American Samoa drafted and ratified its constitution in the 1960s, only the Secretary of the Interior was empowered to ratify amendments to it. However, in 1983, legislation was enacted to add Congress, in addition to the Secretary of the Interior, to the approval process for making changes to the American Samoan Constitution.

American Samoan leaders at the time objected to this additional step and urged returning to the prior process of needing only the Secretary to approve changes to their constitution.

In particular, American Samoan leaders feared that congressional involvement could threaten their current political status, which incorporates their traditional "matai," "chief" and communal land ownership system.

This legislation removes the duplicative, unnecessary step of requiring congressional approval for American Samoa to amend its own constitution. It is a commonsense bill that promotes democracy and self-determination.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN), who is the sponsor of the bill.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 6062, which repeals the outdated statute requiring amendments to American Samoa's Constitution be ratified by Congress.

I want to thank Chairman WESTERMAN and Subcommittee Chair HAGEMAN for their efforts to move this bill through committee, and I thank Ranking Members GRIJALVA and LEGER FERNANDEZ for making this a bipartisan effort. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to my fellow territorial Delegates, Delegate MOYLAN and Delegate SABLAN, for their cosponsorship and support.

The original piece of legislation that H.R. 6062 repeals was moved through without regular order, and over the past several decades, multiple attempts were made to walk back the bill and allow the necessary hearings and oversight to occur. Today that misstep has been corrected.

H.R. 6062 provides equal treatment among the U.S. territories, as no other territory has a similar restriction on editing their local laws. It is a critical and key piece of legislation for American Samoa, allowing us to enact constitutional changes as approved by our people without the burden of unnecessary bureaucracy in Washington.

This bill is designed to restore the essential structure of our government to what it was intended to be, providing a much-needed adjustment to the previous 1983 law. The 1983 law, as it stands, is inconsistent with the principles of local self-government over local affairs, an area where Congress has rightly delegated local authority to us. The current law imposes restrictions that are outdated and counterproductive, hindering our ability to govern ourselves effectively.

This bill is about more than just procedural changes. It is about reaffirming our commitment to self-governance and democratic values. By removing unnecessary obstacles, we are reinforcing the principle that the people of American Samoa have the right and the ability to govern themselves.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I, too, have no further requests for time, and I am prepared to close.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, once again, H.R. 6062 would reinstate the process to approve amendments to the Constitution of American Samoa via approval by the Secretary of the Interior and address concerns of American Samoans.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Delegate RADEWAGEN for her work on this legislation. I urge adoption of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6062.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ACCELERATING APPRAISALS AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5443) to establish a policy regarding appraisal and valuation services for real property for a transaction over which the Secretary of the Interior has jurisdiction, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows: