

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

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, coastal barriers are important for the protection of coastal communities and for wildlife habitat. The BEACH Act balances these two needs by reauthorizing and amending CBRA to recognize the changes to coastal barriers that have taken place over time. The bill would also benefit coastal communities by providing much-needed transparency.

Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague, Mrs. KIGGANS, for her great work on the bill. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation, 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. 5490, 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.

GEOHERMAL ENERGY OPPORTUNITY ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7370) to amend the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 to establish a deadline for processing applications related to geothermal leasing, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7370

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 "Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act" or the "GEO Act".

SEC. 2. EFFECT OF PENDING CIVIL ACTIONS ON PROCESSING APPLICATIONS RELATED TO GEOHERMAL LEASING.

Section 4 of the Geothermal Steam Act of 1970 (30 U.S.C. 1003) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(h) EFFECT OF PENDING CIVIL ACTIONS ON PROCESSING APPLICATIONS RELATED TO GEOHERMAL LEASING.—

"(1) REQUIREMENT TO PROCESS APPLICATIONS.—Notwithstanding the existence of any pending civil action that affects an application for a geothermal drilling permit, sundry notice, notice to proceed, right-of-way, or any other authorization under a valid existing geothermal lease, the Secretary shall, unless a United States Federal court vacates or provides injunctive relief for the applicable geothermal lease, geothermal drilling permit, sundry notice, notice to proceed, right-of-way, or other authorization, approve and issue, or deny, each such application not later than 60 days after completing all requirements under applicable Federal laws and regulations, including the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Endangered Spe-

cies Act of 1973, and division A of subtitle III of title 54, United States Code.

"(2) NO NEW AUTHORITY FOR FEDERAL COURTS.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as modifying any existing authority of a Federal court to vacate or provide injunctive relief for a geothermal lease, geothermal drilling permit, sundry notice, notice to proceed, right-of-way, or other authorization.

"(3) DEFINITION OF AUTHORIZATION.—In this subsection, the term 'authorization' means any license, permit, approval, finding, determination, or other administrative decision issued by a Federal agency, or any interagency consultation, that is required or authorized under Federal law or regulations in order to site, construct, reconstruct, or commence operations of a geothermal project administered by a Federal agency."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

□ 1845

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 7370, 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 today in support of H.R. 7370, the Geothermal Energy Opportunity Act. Geothermal power has serious potential for growth in this country. In fact, DOE estimates that next-generation geothermal technologies, like enhanced geothermal systems, could provide up to 90 gigawatts of reliable baseload energy by 2050.

The best geothermal resources are located out West on Federal lands, and we must do all we can to ensure that bureaucratic red tape does not hamper the development of this resource moving forward.

H.R. 7370, the GEO Act, introduced by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CURTIS), requires the Bureau of Land Management to process geothermal permits and authorizations unless a Federal court says otherwise.

In some cases, the Biden administration has stopped processing permits and authorizations for geothermal and oil and gas projects solely because of the threat of litigation or because they have unilaterally decided to wait for the appearance of new information.

Often, this delay tactic is meant to appease radical special interest groups who wish to stop all energy development on Federal lands and whose former employees have infiltrated the Department.

Simply put, agencies should continue to move projects forward until they are directed otherwise by a court, and

agencies should defend their work in court.

Geothermal energy is becoming easier to produce every day, thanks to enhanced geothermal systems and the advanced methods these developers have borrowed from the oil and gas industry.

We cannot allow the mere threat of frivolous litigation to hamper domestic energy production. This bill would address concerns voiced by the Bureau of Land Management during our hearing to ensure they can comply with existing laws.

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

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the bill led by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CURTIS), H.R. 7370, the GEO Act.

The GEO Act would support the efficient approval of geothermal permit applications without sacrificing thorough review under the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act.

I thank Republicans for their willingness to work across the aisle on improvements to this legislation. Through this bipartisan work, we were able to safeguard important community protections to ensure compliance with Federal laws. This way, we can ensure projects are built in a way that is safe for the communities and the environment.

We have also updated the timelines for approval so that we equip the Bureau of Land Management with adequate time to process applications. With these safeguards in place, this bill takes a step toward sustainably building a clean-energy future that centers our people and our planet.

Geothermal energy will play an especially important role in this clean-energy future. Geothermal has the smallest footprint of any energy-generation technology and uses significantly fewer resources than other sources, especially conventional fossil fuels.

According to the Department of Energy, geothermal uses about 1 to 8 acres per megawatt versus 5 to 10 acres per megawatt for nuclear operations and 19 acres per megawatt for a coal power plant.

Deploying more geothermal will allow us to protect strained resources while protecting the clean energy we know we need, and the GEO Act will assist in the deployment of this exciting technology by ensuring timeliness in permit-approval processes for geothermal energy.

Importantly, it does so without sacrificing the holistic review of environmental and community impacts during the permitting process. It is because of this that 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 gentleman from

Utah (Mr. CURTIS), the lead sponsor of the bill.

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, the GEO Act. Utah is a leader in geothermal energy, but many companies are being held back by the current regulatory environment.

My bill simply requires the Department of the Interior to continue issuing all authorizations as long as the underlying lease remains unchallenged. Geothermal energy is affordable, reliable, and clean energy.

After companies have invested substantial time and resources in obtaining permits, the Department of the Interior sometimes withholds notices to proceed, drilling permits, and other authorizations due to litigation threats against the project.

To be clear, these pauses have occurred without any evidence of wrongdoing by the Department of the Interior or the operators. Instead, they result from unsubstantiated threats made by private organizations. This isn't sustainable if we want geothermal to be part of our clean-energy future.

The chart to my right demonstrates how important this is throughout the West, particularly rural parts of the West, where economic development can be enhanced dramatically by these projects.

The Department of Energy projects that enhanced geothermal systems could contribute up to 90 gigawatts of electricity by 2050, accounting for almost 9 percent of U.S. energy-generation capacity.

Utah is a case study in geothermal energy, and I was proud to support the establishment of Utah FORGE in southern Utah, a dedicated underground field laboratory sponsored by the Department of Energy focused on developing, testing, and accelerating geothermal breakthroughs.

Mr. Speaker, the GEO Act is a critical step toward ensuring that Utah and the United States lead in geothermal energy and technology.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CURTIS) for working on this commonsense piece of legislation. Again, I urge my colleagues to support 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. 7370, 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.

GREAT SALT LAKE STEWARDSHIP ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4094) to amend the Central Utah Project Completion Act to authorize expenditures for the conduct of certain water conservation measures in the Great Salt Lake basin, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4094

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 "Great Salt Lake Stewardship Act".

SEC. 2. WATER CONSERVATION MEASURES IN THE GREAT SALT LAKE BASIN.

Title II of the Central Utah Project Completion Act (Public Law 102-575; 106 Stat. 4605) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SEC. 213. WATER CONSERVATION MEASURES IN THE GREAT SALT LAKE BASIN.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may use any unexpended budget authority provided under subsections (a)(2) and (c) of section 202 for the conduct of water conservation measures within the Great Salt Lake basin in accordance with section 207.

"(b) COMPLIANCE WITH DEFINITE PLAN REPORT.—Any water conservation measure conducted under subsection (a) shall be considered to be compliant with the Definite Plan Report completed under section 205(a)."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ) 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 may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4094, 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 the legislation led by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CURTIS), which amends the Central Utah Project Completion Act.

As we all know, the Great Salt Lake is one of Utah's most famous natural resources. In recent years, however, the lake levels have dropped to historic lows, posing a threat to the lake's ecosystem, local air quality, and the prosperity of surrounding communities.

Mr. CURTIS' legislation would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to use Central Utah Project funds toward new water conservation measures to help recover the Great Salt Lake.

Importantly, this bill does not require any new spending authorizations. I thank Representative CURTIS and the rest of Utah's congressional delegation for their leadership on this issue.

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

Ms. OCASIO-CORTEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4094, the Great Salt Lake Stewardship Act, would authorize expenditures and funding for water conservation measures within the Great Salt Lake basin.

As drought conditions continue to worsen with climate change, the impacts are being felt throughout the West. One key example of the adverse consequences of climate change is the Great Salt Lake, which has been rapidly declining over the past few decades. In 2022, the lake reached all-time historic low water levels, presenting serious ecological concerns.

The declines in the lake's water levels have threatened ecosystem health, disrupted bird migration, and led to concerns of exposure of toxic arsenic lake dust within the lake bottom, which could be carried out with the wind.

The bill we are considering today seeks to address these serious ecological concerns by amending the Central Utah Project Completion Act to provide additional flexibility needed to redirect and authorize unexpended funds, specifically to support water conservation measures under the Water Management Improvement Program in the basin, and expand the program service area.

The Great Salt Lake is only one example of the harms that climate change presents to communities and wildlife across the West. While this legislation is a step forward, Congress must be doing more to combat climate change and drought.

This bill is a great step, and I urge my colleagues to support it, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CURTIS), the sponsor of the bill.

Mr. CURTIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, the Great Salt Lake Stewardship Act.

The Great Salt Lake is essential to the ecological and economic fabric of Utah. Residents have worked tirelessly to protect the lake, but severe drought now threatens its long-term survival.

Recognizing this urgent challenge, the Great Salt Lake Stewardship Act would extend the existing Colorado River Water Conservation Program to include the Great Salt Lake. This would grant the Secretary of the Interior greater flexibility to allocate unused funds from other sections of the Central Utah Project Completion Act, also known as CUPCA, to the water conservation program.