

a more diverse Federal market and supply chain, provided billions of dollars annually through streamlined contracting processes for minority businessowners, and continues to work to help minority businessowners overcome the real and ongoing discrimination that would otherwise hold them back.

Keeping 8(a) intact and relevant must remain a top priority. I appreciate the sponsors for their work, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ELLZEY).

Mr. ELLZEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WILLIAMS and Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ for allowing me to lay out H.R. 5961, the Encouraging Success Act. Bipartisanship on this committee is alive and well, and I thank Congressman THANEDAR for joining me on this bill.

The Small Business Administration's 8(a) program was established in the 1970s to help small businesses compete with large corporations for U.S. Government contracts.

A qualifying small business can only be a part of the program for 9 years. To initially qualify and remain in the 8(a) program, there is a cap to the value of a small business' assets.

Since the program's inception, the asset cap has only been raised twice and is currently at the very small amount of \$6.5 million.

The asset threshold is set through an SBA-determined regulation, and the law does not outline any process of when or how the SBA should reassess the threshold to remain in line with market changes.

Unfortunately, because the requirements to initially qualify for the program or to remain in it haven't kept up with market changes, the cap is set to a level at which a small business is disadvantaged to compete in the open market at the end of the 9-year program.

The SBA's slow-to-change attitude with the asset cap can limit the success of an 8(a) small business or outright kill it.

With the threat of being graduated out of the 8(a) program, small business owners must decide whether their firm's growth is worth being removed from the program.

Our bill, H.R. 6591, helps solve the situation and encourages success of small businesses by compelling the SBA administrator to review the qualification caps with greater frequency to ensure that small businesses participating in the 8(a) program are allowed to grow big enough to compete with larger companies, once their participation in the program ends. We ask for your support for H.R. 6591.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate the great work of my colleagues on this bill, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

I will close by noting that 3 weeks ago, the committee held a hearing on

small business size standards and contracting policies and the barriers they can pose to growth.

As we discussed, the Federal Government needs to both recruit and retain small business government contractors.

We are seeing that retaining small firms, like those in the 8(a) program, is a necessity for the health of the industrial base.

This bill will contribute to the retention of growing small businesses. It is a productive step designed to ensure that minority businessowners can succeed, thrive, and grow in the Federal marketplace and beyond.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation from Congressmen ELLZEY and THANEDAR, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6591, 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.

PROVIDING WEBSITE TO REPORT FRAUD RELATING TO CERTAIN COVID-19 LOANS

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5426) to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to provide a link to resources for submitting reports on suspected fraud relating to certain COVID-19 loans.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5426

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

SECTION 1. WEBSITE TO REPORT FRAUD RELATING TO CERTAIN COVID-19 LOANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall include on the primary website of the Administration a link to a website of the Office of the Inspector General of the Small Business Administration regarding reporting fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, and misconduct, and containing a resource for individuals to report suspected cases of fraud with respect to a covered loan to the Administration.

(b) COVERED LOAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term “covered loan” means—

(1) a loan made under paragraph (36) or (37) of section 7(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(a)); or

(2) a loan made under section 7(b) of such Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)) in response to COVID-19 during the covered period (as defined in section 1110(a) of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9009)).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5426, a bill to require the SBA's administrator to place a visible link on their website to report COVID fraud.

Last summer, the SBA's Inspector General testified to our committee that throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the SBA distributed more than \$200 billion in potentially fraudulent loans.

The committee was also told that in order to work through all these cases, it will take more than 100 years of work. That is simply not a realistic feat, and they need all the help they can get from the American people.

Reporting fraud in the SBA should be easy for everyday Americans to do. Our committee now has a direct fraud reporting link on our website, and the SBA should do the same.

When our committee was researching the need for this bill, we found that the only link to report COVID fraud redirected users to a different website that was in Spanish.

Even after we figured out how to correct the language, it was unclear how to actually report the fraud. This bill will ensure that reporting fraud is simply one click away.

It should be a top priority of this body to recoup as many of these taxpayer dollars as possible and in the most timely and efficient manner possible.

H.R. 5426 is a commonsense bill that will help individuals easily report suspected fraudulent activity and help the SBA and the OIG prioritize which potentially fraudulent loans to investigate.

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

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

Today we are considering H.R. 5426, which will require the SBA to put a link to the IG's fraud hotline on its website for whistleblowers to report suspected fraud.

The good news is that the Biden administration SBA already has a link to the OIG's hotline on its main landing page, but with this bill, it will be here to stay.

In July, Inspector General Ware testified that his office has received 250,000 hotline complaints since the beginning of the pandemic, and more than 90,000 have been identified as actionable. This amounts to more than 100 years of investigative casework.

To that end, the single most important action we can take to support the OIG is to make sure we give them the resources they need to investigate bad actors.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of Ms. VAN DUYNE and Mr. LANDSMAN to curb fraud, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. VAN DUYNE).

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his support of this legislation.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Small Business Administration oversaw what has been described as “the biggest fraud in a generation,” doling out more than \$200 billion to scammers, foreign crime rings, and others who took advantage of a pandemic to enrich themselves.

According to the Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz, the SBA invited this fraud by failing to implement basic safeguards to ensure taxpayer funds were going to the right people. Some of the pandemic aid even went to people involved in transnational crime organizations.

When government mandates forced small businesses to close their doors, some resulting in permanent closures, fraudsters were out taking expensive vacations, buying Lamborghinis, mansions, private jets, horses, luxury jewelry, and more, all on the taxpayers’ dime. While we work to recover the stolen funds, those criminals must be identified and prosecuted.

The Small Business Administration not only failed to implement safeguards to prevent fraud of this scope, but they also failed to comply with the law originally authorizing the aid, which required the agency to include an easily accessible link for the public to report suspected fraud. Instead, the SBA has ignored legal requirements and made it incredibly difficult to report fraud.

As my colleagues and I highlighted during a hearing last year, if you were even able to locate the SBA’s link to report fraudulent COVID-19 loans—which were buried in their website—where did it take you? As our chairman noted, it took you to a different website that was written entirely in Spanish.

The Republican-led Small Business Committee has created a direct link for Americans to easily report pandemic fraud, and the Small Business Administration must do the same.

I urge my colleagues to support our bipartisan legislation to make it easier to report pandemic fraud.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Over the past 3 years, this committee has played an important role in examining the pandemic relief programs, which helped millions of small businesses stay afloat in unprecedented times.

While there may be disagreement on the actual estimates of fraud, it is clear we need to work together to protect the integrity of the SBA programs from bad actors.

The SBA, under the leadership of Administrator Guzman, has taken strong steps to root out fraud in the pandemic relief programs and put strong controls in place to prevent future fraud.

In 2022, SBA established a Fraud Risk Management Board, aligning its practices with GAO’s oversight policies.

A new role was also created, the SBA Special Counsel for Enterprise Risk, to advise the administrator of fraud and risk management activities.

The agency continues to work collaboratively with the SBA Inspector General, the Interagency COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force, and the Department of Justice to recover stolen funds.

I thank Ms. VAN DUYNE and Mr. LANDSMAN for looking for ways to enhance the work that the SBA is undertaking to combat fraud, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation from Congresswoman VAN DUYNE and Congressman LANDSMAN, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5426.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

THE WOSB INTEGRITY ACT OF 2024

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7128) to establish requirements relating to size standard compliance of small business concerns owned and controlled by women for certain purposes, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7128

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 “The WOSB Integrity Act of 2024”.

SEC. 2. WOMEN OWNED SMALL BUSINESS SIZE STANDARD COMPLIANCE FOR RESTRICTED COMPETITION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8(m)(2)(E) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)(2)(E)) is amended by inserting “, including that each such concern does not exceed the applicable size standard established under section 3(a)” after “by women”.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall not be construed as disqualifying any small business concern owned and controlled by women that, as of the date of the enactment of this Act, is certified by a Federal agency, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, or a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator as a small business concern owned and controlled by women from competing for contracts restricted under section 8(m)(2) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)(2)) before the earlier of—

(1) the date on which the small business concern owned and controlled by women submits a notice that such concern is no longer a small business concern owned and controlled by women; or

(2) the date on which the Administrator, Federal agency, or entity that provided such certification determines that the concern exceeds the applicable size standard established under section 3(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632(a)).

(c) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act shall be construed to require the Administrator to perform a formal size determination on a small business concern when considering an application from such concern for certification as a small business concern owned and controlled by women.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

(2) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN.—The term “small business concern” has the meaning given under section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632).

(3) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN.—The term “small business concern” and “small business concern owned and controlled by women” has the meaning given in section 8(m)(1) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)(1)).

(e) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 8(m)(2)(C) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)(2)(C)) is amended by striking “paragraph (3)” and inserting “paragraph (4)”.

(f) COMPLIANCE WITH CUTGO.—No additional amounts are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act or the amendments made by this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

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GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.