

strong step toward transparency and accountability for Amtrak executives and Amtrak's board of directors, which awards the bonuses.

I very much appreciate the gentleman from North Carolina Representative ROUZER's work on this legislation, and I would urge adoption by the House.

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

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of the Amtrak Executive Bonus Disclosure Act. This bill would require Amtrak to post the executive leadership team compensation annually on the Amtrak website.

Congress already requires the Nation's intercity passenger railroad to submit this information to Congress. This bill would increase transparency of the information to the public and require it to be posted online as well, as Amtrak has now done for the last 2 years.

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

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ROUZER), the bill's sponsor.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, the Amtrak Executive Bonus Disclosure Act, which increases accountability and transparency at Amtrak by requiring public disclosure of taxpayer-funded bonuses given to its top executives.

Amtrak was created 55 years ago by Congress as a for-profit entity to relieve our Nation's vital freight railroads of their obligation under law to provide what had proved to be an unprofitable intercity passenger rail service.

Since then, Amtrak has done no better. They have failed to ever make a profit and struggle to provide adequate service.

Even with the post-pandemic improvements in ridership, staggering financial losses remain. In 2023, Amtrak lost more than \$1.7 billion despite collecting \$11 billion in taxpayer subsidies and almost \$22 billion in advanced funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Amtrak's delays and customer service failures were front and center the day after Christmas just a month ago when the Northeast Corridor train didn't board any passengers at Washington's Union Station. Mr. Speaker, 100 customers were stranded during the busiest travel time of the year when operations should be the most efficient.

Amtrak is also hampered with project delays. Delayed projects lead to cost overruns and significant revenue losses. For example, its new Acela II train service for the Northeast Corridor is more than 3 years behind schedule with no firm date on when it will enter service. This delay has led to a \$140 million loss in revenue according

to a 2023 OIG report. Relying on government bailouts to make up for losses must end.

Despite this track record, no pun intended, the Amtrak board of directors awarded the company's 15 executives more than \$9 million in bonuses during the last 2 years. Congress, Amtrak employees, and the public were shocked and outraged, and rightly so, to discover such generous and questionable awards paid largely by taxpayers.

The Transportation Workers Union, which represents 1,500 Amtrak service workers, said that these bonuses are an affront to every Amtrak worker and American taxpayers, which is why the TWU endorsed this bill during the previous Congress when it last passed the House.

While Amtrak has taken steps to be more transparent about their executives' bonuses, they only did so after a hearing before the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Congressional oversight and influence should not be necessary for this information to be made public, but unfortunately, it is. It is why this bill has been brought to the floor today, to require Amtrak to publish its annual executive bonus awards on its website, providing passengers, employees, and taxpayers with transparency regarding how their tax dollars are being spent.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this legislation.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman GRAVES, Representatives FEDERICA WILSON, TROY NEHLS, and DAVID ROUZER for working together to bring this very important legislation forward to increase transparency for the American people. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation. It is a good bill. It should pass.

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

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 192 provides the necessary transparency for Amtrak. This legislation passed the House last Congress under suspension of the rules by voice vote, and I look forward to it passing again today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this 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 Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 192.

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. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE COORDINATION ACT

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill

(H.R. 152) to amend the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 to develop a study regarding streamlining and consolidating information collection and preliminary damage assessments, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 152

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 "Federal Disaster Assistance Coordination Act".

SEC. 2. STUDY TO STREAMLINE AND CONSOLIDATE INFORMATION COLLECTION AND PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1223 of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-254) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 1223. STUDY TO STREAMLINE AND CONSOLIDATE INFORMATION COLLECTION AND PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS.

"(a) INFORMATION COLLECTION.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this section, the Administrator, in coordination with the Small Business Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Disaster Assistance Working Group of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and other appropriate agencies, shall—

"(1) conduct a study and develop a plan, consistent with law, under which the collection of information from disaster assistance applicants and grantees will be modified, streamlined, expedited, efficient, flexible, consolidated, and simplified to be less burdensome, duplicative, and time consuming for applicants and grantees; and

"(2) develop a plan for the regular collection and reporting of information on Federal disaster assistance awarded, including the establishment and maintenance of a website for presenting the information to the public.

"(b) PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this section, the Administrator, in consultation with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, shall convene a working group on a regular basis with the Secretary of Labor, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, the Secretary of Transportation, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, and other appropriate agencies as the Administrator considers necessary, to—

"(1) identify and describe the potential areas of duplication or fragmentation in preliminary damage assessments after disaster declarations;

"(2) determine the applicability of having one Federal agency make the assessments for all agencies; and

"(3) identify potential emerging technologies, such as unmanned aircraft systems, consistent with the requirements established in the FEMA Accountability, Modernization and Transparency Act of 2017 (42 U.S.C. 5121 note), to expedite the administration of preliminary damage assessments.

"(c) COMPREHENSIVE REPORT.—The Administrator shall submit one comprehensive report that comprises the plans developed under subsections (a)(1) and (a)(2) and a report of the findings of the working group convened under subsection (b), which may include recommendations, to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee

on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

“(d) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The comprehensive report developed under subsection (c) shall be made available to the public and posted on the website of the Federal Emergency Management Agency—

“(1) in pre-compressed, easily downloadable versions that are made available in all appropriate formats; and

“(2) in machine-readable format, if applicable.

“(e) SOURCES OF INFORMATION.—In preparing the comprehensive report, any publication, database, or web-based resource, and any information compiled by any government agency, nongovernmental organization, or other entity that is made available may be used.

“(f) BRIEFING.—Not later than 180 days after submission of the comprehensive report, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or a designee, and a member of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, or a designee, shall brief, upon request, the appropriate congressional committees on the findings and any recommendations made in the comprehensive report.”

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—The item relating to section 1223 in the table of contents of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-254) is amended to read as follows:

“Sec. 1223. Study to streamline and consolidate information collection and preliminary damage assessments.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) and the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. HOYLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material into the RECORD on H.R. 152.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 152, the Federal Disaster Assistance Coordination Act, is a commonsense bill that is going to streamline and consolidate the collection of information following a disaster.

While the Federal Emergency Management Agency is the lead Federal agency on disasters, there are often many Federal agencies involved in disaster response and recovery.

I have experienced firsthand just how frustrating it can be when these Federal agencies fail to work together following a natural disaster.

That is why I am proud to support H.R. 152, which would address this concern by amending the FEMA-led working group created in the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018.

Specifically, the working group is going to develop a plan to make the collection of information from disaster survivors less burdensome, duplicative,

and time consuming. This working group is also going to coordinate with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency to identify ways to reduce duplication and streamline the Federal damage assessment process.

I thank the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. EZELL) for his leadership on this legislation.

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

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 152, the Federal Disaster Assistance Coordination Act.

This legislation amends the Disaster Recovery Reform Act to help Federal agencies streamline and consolidate information collection and preliminary damage assessments following disasters.

After a major disaster, there is no time to wait for bureaucracy. However, Federal recovery assistance following disasters is currently hampered by inefficient information collection and assessments conducted by multiple agencies.

This bill will remove information collection barriers that currently impede disaster aid. It creates a working group to identify duplicative assessments and propose their elimination.

Further, it would streamline Federal disaster recovery efforts by concluding that a single agency is sufficient to conduct damage assessments to account for the needs of disaster victims.

The Federal Government can and should be doing this smarter.

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

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. EZELL), the bill's sponsor.

Mr. EZELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, which aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster assistance.

Unfortunately, none of us are strangers to the effects of natural disasters, and we have all had these problems in our hometowns.

Right now we are seeing how these events threaten lives, damage property, and strain local, State, and Federal resources.

In the aftermath, millions of Americans are left seeking help to rebuild their lives and their communities.

However, when seeking necessary Federal relief, applying for disaster assistance can be a frustrating and confusing process. This leads to delays, frustration, and even disqualification from receiving the aid.

This is where my bill comes in. H.R. 152 works to eliminate inefficiencies and expedite the application process by ensuring only one information submission is needed.

Survivors are already facing difficult circumstances, and the application process should not add to their stress.

H.R. 152 represents a crucial step forward toward achieving a more effective disaster recovery system that prioritizes the needs of Americans and ensures they receive the help in a timely manner. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. HOYLE of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, as stewards of taxpayer dollars, we need to ensure that we are spending our money as efficiently as possible.

Government should work. As we have seen in fires in Oregon, hurricanes in North Carolina and Florida, and currently the horrific fires in Los Angeles, when people suffer from a natural disaster, it is imperative that they get the help that they need. They have lost everything, and the last thing we should be doing is dragging them through duplicative bureaucracy.

That is why this bill is so important. This bipartisan bill passed the House on suspension in the 116th, 117th, and 118th Congresses. This bill will help disaster survivors by taking a step toward streamlining the Federal Government's fragmented approach to disaster assistance.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and, hopefully, the Senate will move it through. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, in closing, H.R. 152 is a good government bill that will help improve disaster recovery efforts. It has previously passed the House in the 116th, 117th, and 118th Congresses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support for this 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 Missouri (Mr. GRAVES) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 152.

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. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

□ 1645

POST-DISASTER ASSISTANCE ONLINE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. GRAVES. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 153) to provide for an online repository for certain reporting requirements for recipients of Federal disaster assistance, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 153

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 “Post-Disaster Assistance Online Accountability Act”.