

Needs to Address Risks on Newly Deployed System” (GAO-25-106963; published November 6, 2024).

(b) **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.**—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate an implementation plan detailing the actions the Small Business Administration will undertake to establish and implement policies and procedures to govern information technology modernization projects of the Administration. Such policies and procedures shall, with respect to each project—

(1) for each risk identified, explicitly state the source of such risk in the relevant risk documentation;

(2) clearly define risk parameters;

(3) establish and maintain risk management strategies;

(4) identify and document risks for all phases of the life cycle;

(5) evaluate, categorize, and prioritize risks based on defined risk parameters and develop project risk management plans;

(6) connect measures to mitigate risk to risk mitigation plans;

(7) require that any information technology acquisition plan and any strategic plan contains information needed to manage cyber risks;

(8) require that a traceability analysis is performed and documented;

(9) require that security-related subject matter experts are involved in selection process for contractors for a project;

(10) develop master schedules using the guidelines contained in the publication of the Comptroller General titled “GAO Schedule Assessment Guide: Best Practices for Project Schedules” (GAO-16-89G; published December 22, 2015); and

(11) develop cost estimates using the guidelines contained in the publication of the Comptroller General titled “Cost Estimating and Assessment Guide: Best Practices for Developing and Managing Program Costs” (GAO-20-195G; published March 12, 2020).

(c) **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS.**—The implementation plan required by this section shall include the actions required to carry out the requirements listed in paragraphs (1) through (11) of subsection (b), an identification of the office of the Administration responsible for implementation, and the timelines for completion of each action.

(d) **BRIEFING REQUIRED.**—Not later than 30 days after the submission of the implementation plan required under this section, the Administrator shall provide to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate a briefing on the plan.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. CISNEROS) 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 today in support of H.R. 4491, the SBA IT Modernization Reporting Act, introduced by Representative CISNEROS from the great State of California and Representative JACK from the great State of Georgia.

The SBA is charged with certifying small businesses to participate in certain government contract opportunities.

□ 1420

Last year, the Biden-Harris SBA sought to implement a new certification portal. Unfortunately, this portal’s lackluster planning, creation, and rollout left the SBA with a ticking time bomb.

The Biden administration’s failed Unified Certification Portal rollout resulted in delays, errors, and cybersecurity risks, shutting out small businesses from vital government contracting opportunities.

While this committee shared bipartisan concerns with the Biden-Harris SBA over its rollout plan, or lack thereof, former Administrator Guzman failed to listen, and the results were damaging. Small businesses were delayed for months, sometimes longer, to get approval from the SBA to compete for governmental contracts.

To make matters worse, the SBA allowed small businesses to use the new portal without conducting minimum cyber threat assessments. Entrepreneurs didn’t just face delays, but their sensitive personal and business information was put at risk of cybercrime.

The SBA IT Modernization Reporting Act ensures that this will not happen at the SBA again. This bill requires the SBA to implement the GAO’s recommendations to establish stronger safeguards and improve oversight of IT initiatives so small businesses can rely on an efficient contract certification system.

Small businesses should not be held back by government mismanagement. This bipartisan, commonsense bill restores accountability and helps Main Street focus on what it does best—innovate.

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

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

I rise today in support of my bill, the SBA IT Modernization Reporting Act, and I thank the chairman for his support. I also thank Representative JACK for joining me in introducing this bill, which will go a long way to help SBA modernize its IT infrastructure and improve its services to small businesses.

Billions of dollars in Federal contracts are awarded to small businesses every year, and the SBA plays a vital role in promoting small business participation; however, over the years the SBA’s outdated and inefficient IT sys-

tems have made it harder for entrepreneurs to access the resources they need.

After repeated unsuccessful attempts to develop and deploy a platform that would be a one-stop-shop for contracting certifications, the committee requested the GAO review the SBA’s efforts to figure out why they failed. The report identified the critical gaps in the SBA’s modernization efforts from risk management to cybersecurity and budgeting.

My bill directly addresses these issues by requiring the SBA administrator to implement the 11 recommendations in the GAO report, mandating a clear plan of action and ensuring Congress is kept in the loop. This means better oversight, better execution, and most importantly, better services by the SBA for all small businesses.

An efficient and fully operational IT platform is critical for the SBA to conduct the certifications that allow for so many small businesses to participate in the Federal marketplace. The SBA IT Modernization Reporting Act will ensure that the SBA addresses the root causes that lead IT projects to fall behind schedule, increasing costs, or outright fail.

I am grateful for the partnership of Representative JACK to introduce this commonsense, bipartisan legislation which shows that modernizing how the SBA works is not a partisan issue. Together, we can ensure that the SBA is prepared to meet the evolving needs of small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill to ensure we give the SBA the modern tools it needs to support the success of America’s small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I close by once again thanking my colleague Representative JACK for partnering with me on this important legislation.

By bolstering SBA’s IT infrastructure, we can improve services to small businesses and open up doors to thousands of new entrants in the Federal marketplace. I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation to protect both the SBA and small businesses alike. 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. 4491.

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.

SBA FRAUD ENFORCEMENT EXTENSION ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and

pass the bill (H.R. 4495) to extend the statute of limitations for fraud under certain pandemic programs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4495

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 “SBA Fraud Enforcement Extension Act”.

SEC. 2. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR CERTAIN PROGRAMS.

(a) SHUTTERED VENUE OPERATORS.—Section 324 of division N of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (15 U.S.C. 9009a) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(g) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action for a violation of, or conspiracy to violate, section 371, 641, 1001, 1028A, 1029, 1341, 1343, 1349, 1956, or 1957 of title 18, United States Code, or section 3729 or 3802 of title 31, United States Code, with respect to any grant for shuttered venue operators under this section shall be filed not later than 10 years after the date of the violation or conspiracy.”.

(b) RESTAURANT REVITALIZATION.—Section 5003 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (15 U.S.C. 9009c) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action for a violation of, or conspiracy to violate, section 371, 641, 1001, 1028A, 1029, 1341, 1343, 1349, 1956, or 1957 of title 18, United States Code, or section 3729 or 3802 of title 31, United States Code, with respect to any restaurant revitalization grant under this section shall be filed not later than 10 years after the date of the violation or conspiracy.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. CISNEROS) 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. 4495, the SBA Fraud Enforcement Extension Act, a companion piece of legislation to S. 1199, introduced by Senator ERNST.

H.R. 4495 is bipartisan legislation introduced by the gentleman from Montana (Mr. DOWNING) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. CONAWAY).

For 4 years, the Biden administration's SBA failed to address over \$200 billion in COVID-19 era fraud. H.R. 4495 extends the soon-to-expire statute of

limitations for two pandemic-era relief programs: The Shuttered Venue Operators Grant and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund. The statute of limitations for these programs is set to expire this December.

These two programs combined provided over \$44 billion in grants and funding for small businesses during the pandemic. Unfortunately, fraudsters stole COVID relief funds from small businesses across the country. These fraudsters hope that the statute of limitations for their crimes will pass, allowing them to skirt justice.

As Congress, we cannot let this happen. American taxpayer dollars should be protected at all costs.

In the 117th Congress, we took similar action to extend the statute of limitations under the Paycheck Protection Program and the COVID EIDL program. Today, we have the chance to close this final loophole so that fraudsters do not get away with defrauding American taxpayers and entrepreneurs.

This legislation sends a clear message that the era of taking advantage of the American taxpayer is simply over.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4495, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise today in support of H.R. 4495, the SBA Fraud Enforcement Extension Act. This bill builds off the work done by Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ in a previous Congress. That bill extended the statute of limitations for investigating fraud in the PPP and EIDL programs.

All of the major pandemic relief programs, including the Shuttered Venues Operators Grant Program and Restaurant Revitalization Fund, will have extended statutes of limitations from 5 years to 10 years because of this bill.

Passing this bill into law will send a strong message to fraudsters that their behavior will not be tolerated, and those who committed fraud will be held accountable in the years to come.

The pandemic upended regular SBA operations, and the agency executed 14 years of lending in 14 days to keep small businesses afloat. While these programs helped millions of small businesses, the implementation was not without its flaws.

As we now know, potential fraud could range from \$36 billion up to \$200 billion. While the exact number will never be known, we do know that the vast majority of that fraud came in the first 9 months under the first Trump administration.

Recognizing the potential for fraud, the Biden administration instituted strong upfront controls for RRF and SVOG. To date, the Office of the Inspector General's work has resulted in charges against 25 individuals, 14 criminal convictions, and more than \$61 million in recoveries.

Now, the OIG has 31 open RRF cases and 6 open SVOG cases. While modest

in number, these cases are complex, involving layered transactions, false documentation, and financial concealment. These cases will take time to investigate and prosecute, and we owe it to the experts doing the work to give them the tools they need.

Extending the statute of limitations is only part of the equation. We must provide full funding to the Office of the Inspector General so that they have the resources to root out the fraud. Moreover, we need to ensure proper staffing at the SBA to review the 1,892 active SVOG awards totaling over \$3.2 billion.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, this legislation is a step in the right direction. I commend Mr. DOWNING and Mr. CONAWAY for leading this effort. We need to make sure that no one gets away with fraud simply because the clock ran out.

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

□ 1430

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

Mr. DOWNING. Mr. Speaker, waste, fraud, and abuse fundamentally undermine the American people's trust in the government. When well-intentioned Federal programs are defrauded by criminal bad actors, taxpayer dollars are wasted, and funding for businesses and individuals in need of this vital support is squandered and stolen.

Over the course of the COVID pandemic, the Small Business Administration carried out an extensive effort, channeling funding to small businesses facing unprecedented economic challenges. In total, SBA provided over \$1.2 trillion in emergency loans and grants during this period.

While COVID-era SBA programs in many cases delivered much-needed emergency aid to small businesses, these programs were sometimes exploited by criminals seeking to defraud American taxpayers and illegally secure illegitimate loans and grants. According to a 2023 report from the SBA's Office of Inspector General, SBA distributed over \$200 billion in potentially fraudulent funds in its COVID-era programs.

This level of fraud undermines the integrity of the SBA. It is essential that we track these criminal fraudsters down and hold them accountable for their actions.

Two of these SBA COVID-era programs, the Restaurant Revitalization Fund and the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, directed financial assistance toward small businesses that were disproportionately harmed by lockdown policies due to their reliance on confined gathering spaces.

The statute of limitations for prosecuting fraud within these programs is set to expire beginning early next year. If Congress does not act, law enforcement will not have the necessary time to investigate and prosecute these crimes.

Along with my colleague, Representative CONAWAY, I have introduced H.R. 4495, the SBA Fraud Enforcement Extension Act. This bill extends the statute of limitations from 5 years to 10 years for fraud with respect to SBA's Restaurant Revitalization Fund and the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant. This extension will provide critical time for law enforcement to track down criminals who have defrauded the U.S. Government and hold them accountable.

Small businesses across our country, including in my home district of central and eastern Montana, deserve an SBA that efficiently supports local job creators and isn't undercut by fraud.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Representative HERB CONAWAY, for co-leading this legislation.

The fraudulent spending of Federal taxpayer dollars undermines our trust in the government. It is essential that law enforcement is given the proper tools, time, and authority to punish those who subvert the integrity of the SBA programs and ensure that fraudsters face consequences for their actions.

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

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from the great State of New Jersey (Mr. CONAWAY).

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4495, the SBA Fraud Enforcement Extension Act. I am the co-lead on this legislation, along with my friend, colleague, and fellow Air Force veteran, Representative DOWNING.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 30 million small businesses were negatively impacted. The Federal Government took action to ensure that an unprecedented amount of money flowed into small businesses in the form of grants and loans in order to help them stay afloat.

Over the course of 18 months, the SBA administered four major programs, which delivered 22.1 million loans and \$1.2 trillion in grants. Although these loans did provide much-needed relief to numerous small businesses throughout the United States, there were many who illegally obtained these loans.

The SBA issued a report titled: "Protecting the Integrity of the Pandemic Relief Programs." It states that there are estimates that \$36 billion of the \$1.2 trillion in pandemic relief emergency funds were obtained illegally.

H.R. 4495 would extend the civil and criminal statute of limitations for violations of, or conspiracy to violate, fraud related to the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund.

To ensure small businesses can receive the benefits they deserve, it is important that the SBA is properly funded and staffed. I am concerned that the cut in the SBA's workforce by 43 percent will impede the SBA's ability

to recover the improper and illegally obtained payments.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I urge all of my colleagues to support this very important legislation. I thank my colleague, Representative DOWNING, for allowing me to lead this important piece of legislation with him.

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

Mr. CISNEROS. Mr. Speaker, I will close by thanking Mr. CONAWAY, Mr. DOWNING, and Chairman WILLIAMS for their work on ensuring taxpayer funds are protected from fraudsters. This is a commonsense measure to rebuild public trust, and I encourage my colleagues to vote "yes."

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. We cannot let fraudsters get away with American taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, 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. 4495.

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.

OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4549) to amend the Small Business Act to clarify the responsibilities of the Office of Rural Affairs of the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4549

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 "Office of Rural Affairs Enhancement Act".

SEC. 2. OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS OF THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

Section 26 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 653) is amended—

(1) by amending subsection (b) to read as follows:

“(b) APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Office shall be administered by an Assistant Administrator, who shall be an employee in the competitive service.

“(2) QUALIFICATIONS.—The Assistant Administrator shall—

“(A) have education or professional experience with, or knowledge of, rural affairs and issues relating to small business concerns; and

“(B) have experience providing development assistance to rural small business concerns.”;

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking “small business concerns located in rural areas” and inserting “rural small business concerns”;

(B) in paragraph (3)—

(i) by striking “provide information” and inserting “promote”; and

(ii) by striking “concerning the” and all that follows through the semicolon at the end and inserting the following: “on the policies and programs of the Administration and of other Federal departments and agencies for assisting rural small business concerns.”;

(C) in paragraph (4), by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;

(D) in paragraph (5)—

(i) by striking “the United States Tourism and Travel Administration” and inserting “the National Travel and Tourism Office of the Department of Commerce”;

(ii) by striking “small businesses in rural areas” and inserting “rural small business concerns”; and

(iii) by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”;

(E) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(6) host webinars and outreach events for rural small business concerns as described in subsection (d).”;

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsections:

“(d) OUTREACH.—The Assistant Administrator shall—

“(1) host webinars and outreach events in various regions of the United States for rural small business concerns; and

“(2) invite representatives from district offices of the Administration, resource partners, Federal and State agencies, and other interested persons to participate in such webinars and outreach events.

“(e) REPORT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this subsection, and annually thereafter, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate, and make publicly available on a website of the Administration, a report on the activities of the Office during the one-year period immediately preceding the date of submission of the report.

“(2) CONTENTS.—Each report required under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

“(A) The operational details of the Office, including the name of the Assistant Administrator, the budget of the Office, and the number of full-time employees employed by or detailed to the Office.

“(B) A summary of the activities conducted under subsection (c).

“(C) The number of webinars and outreach events conducted by the Administration to promote policies and programs described in paragraph (3) of subsection (c) and to provide information described in paragraph (4) of such subsection.

“(D) An analysis of the lending programs of the Administration in serving the needs of rural small business concerns.

“(E) Information gathered from any webinars and outreach events conducted by the Administration during the period covered by the report.

“(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.—The term ‘Assistant Administrator’ means the Assistant Administrator of the Office of Rural Affairs appointed under subsection (b).

“(2) RESOURCE PARTNERS.—The term ‘resource partners’ means—

“(A) small business development centers;

“(B) women’s business centers (described under section 29);