

cell phones, and it could bring a huge benefit for public safety.

This legislation would kick-start the process for mobile service providers to utilize satellite connectivity to send alert messages in areas that may not have access to terrestrial cell network coverage.

This legislation has strong bipartisan support. I encourage my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7022, the Mystic Alerts Act.

Emergency alerting capabilities have come a long way in recent decades as a direct byproduct of innovation and breakthroughs in wireless technology.

Not long ago, 911 calls predominantly were made from landline phones, and emergency alerts were received primarily over broadcast television and radio channels.

Both capabilities still exist and have an important role in emergency communications, but I expect for most Americans, they make their 911 calls and receive their emergency alerts on their cell phone, a smartphone.

The creation of the Wireless Emergency Alert, or WEA, in 2012 marked a significant leap forward in our ability to disseminate warning and alert messages to the public.

Prior to 2012, Americans needed to already be tuned into broadcast programming to receive an alert being distributed for any number of important situations. In the case of a hurricane or a winter storm that was forecasted in advance, for instance, the Emergency Alert System was critical for broadly distributing public safety updates and instructions to viewers. But we know that not all emergencies announce themselves days in advance.

All across the country, natural disasters like tornadoes, wildfires, and flash floods show up with little or no advance warning. One tragedy after another has demonstrated that when a wildfire spreads or floodwaters rise rapidly without warning, being able to push emergency warning information out directly to cell phones in a danger zone is one of the most powerful tools we have to save lives.

The WEA system allows alerting authorities at nearly every level of government the ability to reach Americans where they are. Cell phones are ubiquitous today, and if we avoid falling into the traps of unclear and over-alerting, it will only continue to be more effective as wireless providers and alerting authorities take steps forward to improve geotargeting and location accuracy.

H.R. 7022 directs the FCC to take steps that will open up the WEA system so that satellite communication providers can leverage direct-to-cell capabilities to deliver wireless emergency alerts to cell phones in terrestrial dead zones where mobile carriers don't have coverage.

This is incredibly important for Americans who enjoy spending time in our beautiful national parks and forests, skiing in the mountains, and exploring other natural areas where connectivity is limited but where being without emergency information can be deadly, as we saw with Mystic this summer.

I thank Representatives FLETCHER and PFLUGER for their leadership on this effort to not only expand the reach of lifesaving emergency alerts but to turn tragedy into a victory to ensure more families don't suffer the same tragedy.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 7022, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER), my good friend.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the bipartisan H.R. 7022, the Mystic Alerts Act introduced by Congressman PFLUGER.

Public safety is one of Congress' most serious responsibilities, and this bill addresses a clear and urgent gap in our emergency communication system. Recent disasters have reminded us that when lives are on the line, emergency alerts must work immediately, reliably, and everywhere.

But too often, that is not guaranteed. In moments of crisis, terrestrial communication networks can be damaged, overloaded, or simply unavailable. When that happens, families may not receive the warnings they need until it is too late.

□ 1620

Like Congressman PFLUGER, my family was directly impacted by the Camp Mystic flooding in Texas. As we all know, I had two granddaughters who were there. They lost one of their cousins, Janie Hunt.

That tragedy showed in the clearest possible terms how fast conditions can deteriorate and how devastating the consequences can be when warnings do not reach people in time.

The Mystic Alerts Act takes an important step forward by directing the FCC to establish standards and requirements for delivering emergency alerts through satellite connectivity. That means building redundancy into the system so that when traditional networks fail, alerts can still get through.

That matters for rural communities. It matters for disaster zones. It matters for places where geography, infrastructure damage, or network congestion can leave people isolated at the worst possible moment. It matters for every American who expects that, in an emergency, the government will do everything it can to get critical warnings into their hands.

This legislation will help modernize our emergency alerting framework, strengthen resilience, and improve our

ability to save lives during floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and other disasters. It also honors the victims of the Camp Mystic flood by ensuring that we will not simply mourn tragedy but learn from it and act.

I commend Congressman PFLUGER for his leadership and for bringing forward a practical, bipartisan solution. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 7022, the Mystic Alerts Act.

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Madam Speaker, in closing, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 7022, the Mystic Alerts Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Virginia for her support of this bill. I, too, encourage all Members to vote for H.R. 7022 for immediate passage, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BICE). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7022, 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.

#### MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Matthew Hanley, one of his secretaries.

#### EXPEDITING FEDERAL BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT REVIEWS ACT

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1681) to require the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to establish an interagency strike force to ensure that certain Federal land management agencies, including the organizational units of such agencies, prioritize the review of requests for communications use authorizations, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1681

*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 "Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act".

#### SEC. 2. ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERAGENCY STRIKE FORCE.

(a) INTERAGENCY STRIKE FORCE.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary shall establish an interagency strike force to ensure that each Federal land management agency, including each organizational unit of the agency, prioritizes the review of requests for communications use authorizations.

(2) MEMBERS.—The strike force shall be composed of—

(A) the Assistant Secretary;

(B) the head of each Federal land management agency;

(C) a designee of the Secretary of Agriculture, other than the Chief of the Forest Service; and

(D) a designee of the Secretary of the Interior, other than the Director of the Bureau of Land Management.

(3) DUTIES.—The duties of the strike force shall include—

(A) conducting periodic calls between the members of the strike force to ensure that each Federal land management agency, including each organizational unit of the agency, prioritizes the review of requests for communications use authorizations;

(B) establishing objective and reasonable goals for the review of requests for communications use authorizations; and

(C) monitoring, and facilitating the accountability of, each Federal land management agency, including each organizational unit of the agency, with respect to meeting such goals.

(4) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on the effectiveness of the strike force in ensuring that each Federal land management agency, including each organizational unit of the agency, prioritizes the review of requests for communications use authorizations.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives;

(B) the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives;

(C) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate;

(D) the Committee on Environment and Public Works of the Senate;

(E) the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives; and

(F) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate.

(2) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term “Assistant Secretary” means the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

(3) COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY.—The term “communications facility” has the meaning given the term “communications facility installation” in section 6409(d) of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (47 U.S.C. 1455(d)).

(4) COMMUNICATIONS USE.—The term “communications use” means the placement and operation of a communications facility.

(5) COMMUNICATIONS USE AUTHORIZATION.—The term “communications use authorization” means an easement, right-of-way, lease, license, or other authorization—

(A) provided by a Federal land management agency;

(B) to locate or modify a communications facility on covered land; and

(C) for the primary purpose of authorizing the occupancy and use of such land for communications use.

(6) COVERED LAND.—The term “covered land” means—

(A) public lands; and

(B) National Forest System land.

(7) FEDERAL LAND MANAGEMENT AGENCY.—The term “Federal land management agency” means each of the following:

(A) The Bureau of Land Management.

(B) The Forest Service.

(8) NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM.—The term “National Forest System” has the meaning given that term in section 11(a) of the Forest

and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1609(a)).

(9) ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT.—The term “organizational unit” means—

(A) with respect to the Bureau of Land Management—

(i) a State office;

(ii) a regional office;

(iii) a district office; or

(iv) a field office; and

(B) with respect to the Forest Service—

(i) a regional office;

(ii) a management unit; or

(iii) a ranger district office.

(10) PUBLIC LANDS.—The term “public lands” has the meaning given that term in section 103 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1702).

(11) STRIKE FORCE.—The term “strike force” means the interagency strike force established under subsection (a)(1).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN) and the gentlewoman from Virginia (Ms. McCLELLAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material into the RECORD on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1681, the Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act, sponsored by Representatives EVANS and CRAIG.

This legislation establishes an interagency strike force to help prioritize permitting reviews for deploying broadband on Federal lands.

Broadband has become an essential part of everyday life. We need broadband for work, to stay connected with loved ones, and even for healthcare and education. However, too many Americans still lack access to broadband. Thus, Congress has provided billions of dollars to ensure that every American gets connected.

Deploying on Federal lands is a critical part of closing the digital divide. Many unserved communities are near Federal lands, and thus broadband providers must transverse these lands to reach these unserved homes and businesses.

Unfortunately, deploying broadband on Federal lands can be burdensome, particularly when it comes to the permitting process. Providers have testified that this complicated process moves slowly, and they are often left in the dark on the status of their applications. As a result, unserved communities are left without the broadband they need as providers wait for agencies to approve their permits.

We need to reform the broadband permitting process. Not only do we need to streamline how we review permits,

we need to ensure the agencies that manage Federal lands prioritize these reviews. H.R. 1681, the Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act, will help ensure this happens.

H.R. 1681 directs the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to create an interagency strike force that includes the head of each Federal land management agency to ensure that they are prioritizing the review of broadband-permitting applications. In addition to holding periodic calls, the strike force will establish goals for the review of the requests, and monitor and hold each agency accountable for these goals.

This strike force is necessary to expedite the permitting process so that every American has access to broadband.

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

Ms. McCLELLAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1681, the Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act, which was introduced by Representatives CRAIG and EVANS.

When communications providers deploy broadband infrastructure, efficiency is critical to stretching their capital investments as far and to as many homes and businesses as possible. In the course of developing and comparing different ways to carry out a project, providers may determine that the most direct route to lay broadband infrastructure requires traversing lands owned and managed by the Federal Government.

At the Energy and Commerce Committee, we have heard testimony from witnesses and hearings about delays and inefficiencies handling permit applications that are pending at the various agencies overseeing Federal lands. While environmental and historic preservation protections will always be of paramount importance to me, we should always strive to ensure that our agencies operate as efficiently as possible.

With H.R. 1681, Congress can ensure agencies dispense with applications to deploy communications infrastructure more quickly, where no additional environmental or historic preservation due diligence is required.

This bill requires the administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, or NTIA, to establish an interagency strike force that will improve collaboration between NTIA and the agencies and departments responsible for reviewing and approving communications use applications.

Our intent is for NTIA to bring relevant parties together to identify obstacles and inefficiencies that have slowed progress in the past and collaborate on solutions to address these barriers going forward. This will ultimately expedite the deployment of

broadband infrastructure to the rural and remote areas that are still most in need.

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

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. EVANS) to speak on the bill.

Mr. EVANS of Colorado. Madam Speaker, today I rise in strong support of my bipartisan bill, the Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act. This legislation, which I am proud to lead with my colleague from Minnesota, will help streamline broadband permitting to help deliver fast, reliable internet to the communities that need it most by creating a new system for prioritizing broadband deployment requests on or across Federal land.

It is a commonsense piece of legislation that, as we have heard, directs the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to establish a strike force to support Federal land management agencies' review of requests to deploy broadband across and through Federal land.

My home State of Colorado is the heart of the Rocky Mountain West with more than 24 million acres of Federal land, which is about the size of Indiana. Roughly 36 percent of the total acreage of Colorado is Federal land, and it serves countless roles, from conservation and recreation to other activities. These diverse uses also mean that multiple agencies have jurisdiction over these 24 million acres from the National Park Service to the United States Forest Service to the Bureau of Land Management. These agencies often have duplicative or redundant permitting processes which can delay what should be a simple permit.

In all parts of Colorado, from the Front Range to the Western Slope, rural communities are often surrounded by Federal lands which means they face greater difficulty building out infrastructure, including broadband. These are the communities that are often left behind when it comes to critical service such as internet access and easy communication.

It is 2026. Reliable, high-speed internet should not be considered a luxury. It is a necessity. Families, students, and small businesses need to be able to easily access this important service.

As a cop for 10 years, I also know that law enforcement and public safety rely on broadband access to promptly identify and interdict threats in our communities and respond to natural disasters. Without these reliable services, public safety operations are going to be less coordinated, which causes first responders to face delays and disorganization.

□ 1630

By law, Federal agencies are required to grant or deny broadband applications within 270 days, but these dead-

lines are often missed. The U.S. Government Accountability Office recently reported that roughly half of the communications use applications submitted to BLM and the United States Forest Service from 2018 to 2022 either exceeded the 270-day deadline or didn't have enough information to reveal whether the deadline had even been met.

As a result, broadband developers report that deploying fiber in rural areas can take an average of 5 to 10 years to complete. This is completely unacceptable, and it is a complete slap in the face to rural communities that are already underserved.

I am proud to serve as a leading voice for permitting reform in this Congress, not just for broadband but for many other types of permits, such as energy generation and distribution, that rely on broadband.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is key to fixing our broken permitting process. I am proud that it is bipartisan. I am proud that it is commonsense. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

Ms. MCCLELLAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 1681, the Expediting Federal Broadband Deployment Reviews Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Virginia (Ms. MCCLELLAN) for her support of this important legislation. I, too, urge a "yes" vote on this important bill, H.R. 1681, for immediate approval.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1681.

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. ALLEN. Madam 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 BROADBAND DEPLOYMENT TRACKING ACT

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1343) to require the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information to submit to Congress a plan for the Assistant Secretary to track the acceptance, processing, and disposal of certain Form 299s, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1343

*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 Broadband Deployment Tracking Act".

SEC. 2. PLAN FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO TRACK THE ACCEPTANCE, PROCESSING, AND DISPOSAL OF CERTAIN FORM 299S.

(a) PLAN.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Assistant Secretary shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a plan containing a description of—

(1) the process by which the Assistant Secretary proposes to—

(A) track the acceptance, processing, and disposal of each Form 299 for communications use authorization;

(B) provide applicants additional transparency with respect to the status of the applicable Form 299 for communications use authorization; and

(C) most expeditiously implement the plan; and

(2) any potential barriers to implementing the plan that are identified by the Assistant Secretary.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term "appropriate congressional committees" means—

(A) the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate.

(2) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term "Assistant Secretary" means the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

(3) COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY.—The term "communications facility" has the meaning given the term communications facility installation in section 6409(d) of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (47 U.S.C. 1455(d)).

(4) COMMUNICATIONS USE.—The term "communications use" means the placement and operation of a communications facility.

(5) COMMUNICATIONS USE AUTHORIZATION.—The term "communications use authorization" means an easement, right-of-way, lease, license, or other authorization—

(A) provided by the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture;

(B) to locate or modify a communications facility on covered land; and

(C) for the primary purpose of authorizing the occupancy and use of such covered land for communications use.

(6) COVERED LAND.—The term "covered land" means—

(A) public lands; and

(B) National Forest System land.

(7) FORM 299.—The term "Form 299" means the form established under section 6409(b)(2)(A) of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (47 U.S.C. 1455(b)(2)(A)), or any successor form.

(8) NATIONAL FOREST SYSTEM.—The term "National Forest System" has the meaning given the term in section 11(a) of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1609(a)).

(9) PUBLIC LANDS.—The term "public lands" means land under the management of—

(A) the Bureau of Land Management;

(B) the National Park Service;

(C) the United States Fish and Wildlife Service; or

(D) the Bureau of Reclamation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN) and the gentlewoman from Virginia (Ms. MCCLELLAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia.