

Mr. ROY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WIED). The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. NEGUSE. 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 question will be postponed.

FIRE IMPROVEMENT AND REFORMING EXCEPTIONAL EVENTS ACT

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1174, I call up the bill (H.R. 6387) to amend the Clean Air Act to require revisions to regulations governing the review and handling of air quality monitoring data influenced by exceptional events or actions to mitigate wildfire risk, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1174, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6387

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 “Fire Improvement and Reforming Exceptional Events Act” or the “FIRE Act”.

SEC. 2. AIR QUALITY MONITORING DATA INFLUENCED BY EXCEPTIONAL EVENTS OR ACTIONS TO MITIGATE WILDFIRE RISK.

Section 319(b) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7619(b)) is amended—

(1) in the subsection heading, by inserting “OR ACTIONS TO MITIGATE WILDFIRE RISK” after “EVENTS”;

(2) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in the paragraph heading, by striking “DEFINITION OF EXCEPTIONAL EVENT” and inserting “DEFINITIONS”;

(B) in subparagraph (A), by redesignating clauses (i) through (iv), as subclauses (I) through (IV), respectively;

(C) by striking “(A)” and all that follows through “an event that—” and inserting the following:

“(A) EXCEPTIONAL EVENT.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘exceptional event’ means an event that—”;

(D) by amending subclause (III) of subparagraph (A)(i), as redesignated, to read as follows:

“(III) is an event that is—

“(aa) a natural event;

“(bb) caused by a human activity that is intended to mirror the occurrence or recurrence of a natural event; or

“(cc) caused by a human activity that is unlikely to recur; and”;

(E) by striking subparagraph (B) and inserting the following:

“(i) EXCLUSIONS.—In this subsection, the term ‘exceptional event’ does not include—

“(I) ordinarily occurring stagnation of air masses;

“(II) meteorological inversions; or

“(III) air pollution relating to source non-compliance.”; and

(F) by adding at the end the following:

“(B) ACTION TO MITIGATE WILDFIRE RISK.—The term ‘action to mitigate wildfire risk’ means a prescribed fire or similar measure, undertaken in accordance with State approved practices, to reduce the risk and severity of wildfires.”;

(3) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) by striking “March 1, 2006” and inserting “18 months after the date of enactment of the FIRE Act”;

(ii) by inserting “revisions to” before “regulations”;

(iii) by adding “or actions to mitigate wildfire risk” before the period at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (B)—

(i) by inserting “including proposed revisions to regulations,” after “subparagraph (A).”;

(ii) by inserting “or action to mitigate wildfire risk” after “an exceptional event”;

(iii) by striking “paragraph (3)” and inserting “this section”;

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(C) REGIONAL ANALYSIS.—When more than one State notifies the Administrator of its intent to submit a petition pursuant to this section for an exceptional event or an action to mitigate wildfire risk for the same air quality event, or, if the Administrator determines such a multistate air quality event has occurred, the Administrator shall conduct regional modeling and analysis sufficient to satisfy the demonstration required for an exceptional event or an action to mitigate wildfire risk petition for such air quality event.

“(D) TRANSPARENCY.—Not later than 12 months after the date of enactment of the FIRE Act, the Administrator shall establish, and thereafter update monthly, a public website describing the status of all petitions submitted pursuant to this section for exceptional events and actions to mitigate wildfire risk.”;

(4) in paragraph (3)(A)—

(A) by redesignating clauses (ii) through (v) as clauses (iii) through (vi), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after clause (i) the following:

“(ii) the principle that actions to mitigate wildfire risk can play an important role in reducing the magnitude and frequency of wildfires”;

(5) in paragraph (3)(B)—

(A) in clause (i), by inserting “or action to mitigate wildfire risk” before “must be”;

(B) by amending clause (ii) to read as follows:

“(ii) a clear causal relationship must exist, or be reasonably expected to exist, between the measured exceedances of a national ambient air quality standard and the exceptional event or action to mitigate wildfire risk to demonstrate that the exceptional event or action to mitigate wildfire risk caused a specific air pollution concentration at a particular air quality monitoring location.”; and

(C) by amending clause (iv) to read as follows:

“(iv) there are criteria and procedures for the Governor of a State to petition the Administrator to exclude air quality monitoring data that is directly due to exceptional events or actions to mitigate wildfire risk from use in determinations by the Administrator with respect to—

“(I) area or source exceedances or violations of the national ambient air quality standards;

“(II) the designation, redesignation, classification, or reclassification of an area;

“(III) the demonstration by a State of attainment of a national ambient air quality standard;

“(IV) attainment determinations;

“(V) attainment date extensions;

“(VI) finding a State implementation plan to be inadequate; or

“(VII) preconstruction demonstrations under section 165(a)(3).”;

(6) by striking paragraph (4).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce or their respective designees.

The gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) each will control 30 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the legislation and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 6387.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6387, the FIRE Act, a bipartisan bill introduced by Congressman GABE EVANS of Colorado and co-led by Congressman ADAM GRAY of California.

The FIRE Act ensures that States are not penalized for wildfire mitigation practices like prescribed or controlled burns and brush clearing. States currently limit these practices for fear of falling out of containment of national air quality standards.

Unlike wildfires, prescribed burns do not automatically qualify as exceptional events under the current provisions of the Clean Air Act. This is because prescribed burns are human caused, likely to recur, and preventable. As a result, prescribed burns are often counted against States for the purpose of national air quality standards.

In 2016, the EPA amended the exceptional events rule in an effort to include prescribed burns, but the attempt failed. Only one prescribed fire qualified for the exceptional events exception in the last decade.

Congress must amend the Clean Air Act to allow wildfire mitigation to be included as an exceptional events exception.

□ 1320

Time has taught us that agency action is not enough to address the current statutory obstacles. The FIRE Act directly amends the Clean Air Act so that prescribed burns are treated as exceptional events and States are not penalized for wildfire mitigation measures. It provides clarity and predictability for air quality planning and encourages proactive wildfire measures.

There is nearly unanimous agreement that increasing the use of prescribed fire and other wildfire mitigation practices is necessary to reduce the growing wildfire threats across the country.

With what is projected to be a severe wildfire season around the corner, Congress must modernize the Clean Air Act to ensure that wildfire mitigation practices are eligible for the exceptional events rule. The FIRE Act allows States to perform prescribed burns and wildfire mitigation activities without severe economic consequences, protecting their communities from the devastating impact of wildfires.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 6387, the FIRE Act. The FIRE Act is yet another dishonest attempt, in my opinion, by Republicans to weaken the Clean Air Act, which will make Americans sicker while healthcare costs skyrocket.

Republicans are peddling this dangerous bill as an attempt to promote prescribed burns and combat wildfires. As has been true for the other dirty bills that we considered over the last week or so, this bill fails to address the stated goal and instead provides overly broad exemptions to the Clean Air Act that will harm American families and children.

The FIRE Act does little to make it easier for States to use prescribed burns as a tool for wildfire management. Instead, it expands the definition of exceptional events that States can claim when demonstrating compliance with air quality standards, to include regularly occurring weather like drought and heat. To put it simply, the FIRE Act would give corporate polluters a free pass on the Clean Air Act and use a hot day as an excuse to ignore the harm inflicted on the health of Americans.

Prescribed fire is an essential tool for wildlife management, particularly as climate change increases the occurrence of large, high-intensity wildfires. When done properly, prescribed fires can effectively manage wildfires while reducing smoke exposure to wildfire-prone communities. When disaster strikes and wildfires occur, States should not be punished for pollution that is beyond their control.

Fortunately, the Clean Air Act already gives EPA the flexibility to qualify wildfire and prescribed burns as exceptional events under the Clean Air Act, which States can claim when demonstrating compliance with air quality standards. In fact, Trump's EPA issued a memo clearly stating that the agency will not count emissions from prescribed fires toward attainment designations under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, making provi-

sions of this bill essentially redundant and unnecessary.

It is worth highlighting that this bill goes much further than wildfires and prescribed burns. As I mentioned, the FIRE Act drastically changes the definition of exceptional events to include regularly occurring weather events, like drought and hot days. If signed into law, the FIRE Act would allow States to write off all pollution that occurs during a dry spell or heat wave, events we know will occur more often due to climate change.

I find this provision to be deeply troubling. We know climate change is making drought and heat waves more persistent. Republicans want to use them as justification to increase pollution, which will worsen public health and accelerate climate change, without any consequences.

It is another line of evidence that Republicans are more interested in helping out their polluter friends than protecting the health and well-being of Americans.

Unfortunately, Republican attempts to undermine the public health protections at the core of the Clean Air Act are commonplace. The health harms of air pollution are well documented and being felt by communities across the country.

Today, over half of Americans live in an area with unsafe levels of air pollution. These communities see more diagnoses of diseases like asthma, COPD, heart disease, and certain types of cancer, all of which require long-term treatment and medication.

These things are becoming more common, but now Republicans and the Trump administration want to make it easier for industry to pollute more. Worse, they want to cover up these harms.

House Republicans are doing nothing to lower costs or address the affordability crisis. Instead, over the last week, they have had us debating bills that gut the Clean Air Act's public health protections, and this bill is no exception. It is a retread of old ideas that would drive up pollution above levels that are safe to breathe. The bill does nothing to improve the lives of the everyday Americans we are elected to serve.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "no" on this dangerous, damaging, and, essentially, dirty air bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am constantly amazed at what my colleagues across the aisle say in response to these bills. They make this claim that prescribed burns will increase air pollution, when the fact is that we are trying to prevent wildfires.

When you compare the emissions from a prescribed burn to the emissions from a wildfire, it could be as little as 17 percent of what a wildfire produces. They both emit fine particulate matter

and carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide, but prescribed burns are managed to ensure more complete combustion and less overall polluted output per acre, whereas a wildfire consumes more fuel and produces denser and more toxic smoke.

What they are arguing for is more pollution and more dangerous fires. We have seen what has happened in California and other States, where wildfires have gotten out of control. Look at Paradise in California, the number of lives lost and the amount of destruction there. Those fires actually produced more pollutants, more toxins, and more tremendous damage.

I am, again, amazed. I guess they doubt the common sense of the average American about these issues, when the fact of the matter is that prescribed burns reduce the amount of pollutants that are emitted into the atmosphere.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleagues of the cost of air pollution to the American people because it seems they are only focused on the cost to their polluter friends.

More than 26 million people, including over 4.5 million children, in the U.S. live with asthma. Asthma causes nearly 1.8 million emergency department visits, more than 94,000 hospitalizations, and an estimated \$80 billion in healthcare costs annually. Air pollution is known to cause and exacerbate asthma.

Republicans claim that existing regulatory processes, like exceptional events demonstrations, are too hard and take too long. They don't acknowledge why we have these processes in the first place, and that is to protect the health of our families, our children, and the most vulnerable among them.

The FIRE Act would worsen health harms to our communities. While the Clean Air Act has successfully cut air pollution in the U.S. by nearly 80 percent in its over 50-year history, nearly half of the U.S. population still lives in areas with poor air quality. We should be taking action to protect public health, not rolling back safeguards that the Republicans find inconvenient.

The FIRE Act has serious problems that allow industry to exploit hot days and drought to drive up pollution without consequence. That is the problem.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "no," and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, once again, it is as though we are debating two different bills. I have no idea where industry comes into this. This is about protecting forests. It is about promoting wildlife. It is about reducing emissions by prescribed burns.

If my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are interested in looking up this data, what they are saying is in direct contradiction to what the science

shows: A prescribed burn reduces the amount of emissions compared to a wildfire.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. KILEY).

Mr. KILEY of California. Mr. Speaker, the best way to protect air quality is to stop catastrophic wildfires. This is a statement that should not be controversial and is one the truth of which we know all too well in California.

For years in my State, the State piled on regulation after regulation after regulation, piled on new forms of litigation, new fuel blends, all things that raise the cost of living for people in our State. Yet, even more perversely, at the same time, they made it more difficult to proactively mitigate the risk of wildfire through active forest management.

Let me tell you what the perverse result of that was. Between 2004 and 2020—this is a period of 16 years—you can aggregate all the emissions that were reduced through emission reduction policies in California—a period of 16 years leading up to the year 2020—take every single emission that was reduced as a result of State policy over those 16 years, and double that number of emissions were released into the atmosphere because of the fires that occurred just that year.

□ 1330

All of the sacrifices Californians had made over the preceding 16 years were wiped out two times over because of these devastating wildfires that, of course, on top of the environmental damage that they inflicted, caused untold damage to life and property and our communities.

The measure that we have before us today could not be more commonsensical. It is that we should not disincentivize States from taking steps that have been proven by the best science to reduce the risk of wildfires that are an absolute catastrophe for the environment. That includes the use of prescribed burns, which should not be considered a detriment to air quality when the entire point is to improve air quality over the long term.

This bill, in addition to other measures like the Fix Our Forests Act, which will allow us to do better forest management without as many arbitrary delays and hurdles to jump over, are vitally needed to assure that we don't continue to have wildfires that devastate our communities and devastate our environment.

I will say it again: The best way to protect air quality is to stop fires from happening, and this bill will help us do that.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Oregon (Ms. DEXTER).

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition to the FIRE Act, a bill that undermines the protections that keeps our air safe to breathe.

In 1970, Democrats and Republicans came together to pass the Clean Air

Act and put public health at the center of our national policymaking. That was a promise to the American people, and it is a promise we cannot forget. That law has delivered cleaner air and longer lives, but our work is not finished.

More than 100 million Americans live in counties with unhealthy levels of pollution. Our children, our seniors, low-income communities, and communities of color continue to carry the heaviest burden. The public has been clear with us. Nearly 70 percent of Americans believe everyone should be held to the standards set by the Clean Air Act.

The question before us is simple: Why would we disregard the commonsense policy that protects the very communities we are here to serve?

The FIRE Act undermines a centerpiece of the Clean Air Act: the National Ambient Air Quality Standards program. Right now, there are narrow exceptions to the rules that set limits on how polluted our air can be. Republicans want to blow those exceptions wide open, so even routine conditions like hot weather or drought could be used as an excuse to ignore pollution limits.

I represent Oregon, where wildfires are a constant and defining challenge. We manage wildfires and conduct prescribed burns every year to protect our forests and communities. I have spoken directly with the people doing that work, and this is not a bill they want.

They have asked for clarity and precision. This bill offers neither. Instead, it creates a vague, sweeping policy that risks turning "exceptional" into "routine."

As a physician and lung doctor, I know exactly what that means. It means more asthma attacks, more heart attacks, more strokes, and more cancer diagnoses.

We know better than this, and it is not why my constituents sent me here. They sent me here to fight for clean air, for healthy communities, and for a future where public health is not compromised.

For these reasons, at the appropriate time, I will offer a motion to recommit this bill to committee. If the House rules permitted, I would have offered the motion with an important amendment to this bill. My amendment would ensure this bill does not take effect until EPA and CASAC certify that it will not increase health harms or the cost of treating them.

I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment into the RECORD immediately prior to the vote on the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

Ms. DEXTER. Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for the motion to recommit.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms. HAGEMAN).

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6387 to ensure States are not unjustly penalized under the Clean Air Act for engaging in responsible, proactive wildfire mitigation activities.

Mr. Speaker, wildfires are, unfortunately, all too common in my home State of Wyoming and across the intermountain West.

According to the Office of State Lands and Investments, approximately 250,000 acres of land in Wyoming were burned in 2025 due to more than 1,600 wildfires. The numbers were even worse in 2024, with around 850,000 acres burned through more than 2,000 fires. With just one fire, it burned 25,000 acres in 3 hours, giving an indication of the fuel load in the Bighorn National Forest.

Wildfires have profound effects on all of my constituents, including threatening the livelihoods of our farmers and ranchers, endangering our courageous first responders, and causing serious respiratory and other health complications for Wyoming families.

Given these life-altering consequences, we must use every tool at our disposal, including responsible forest management—which has historically been hampered by bad policies coming out of Washington, D.C.—to minimize the scale and damage caused by these destructive forces of nature.

Active forest management through prescribed burns and mechanical thinning is essential to supporting healthy ecosystems, preventing catastrophic wildfires, and improving the long-term air quality.

Unfortunately, as it currently stands under the Clean Air Act, the use of these individual wildfire mitigation measures can create uncertainty, discouraging their use out of concern that doing so would lead to noncompliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Failure to meet these standards can result in nonattainment designations, which can come with a host of immediate and downstream challenges, including excessive fees and sanctions, delayed infrastructure projects, and slowed economic growth, all of which can lead to immeasurable harm for smaller Wyoming communities.

By reforming the Clean Air Act to ensure these wildfire mitigation activities are appropriately treated as exceptional events, we are incentivizing their use and putting a stop to unfair and counterproductive regulatory punishments.

I thank Representative EVANS and Chairman GUTHRIE for their steadfast leadership on this legislation and urge all of my colleagues to support H.R. 6387.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I again am at a loss to understand where my Democratic colleagues are coming from with this argument about all of these problems

with our air quality. We have only had one exceptional event approved, and I am not sure that it was actually executed since the exceptions were put in, the exceptional event provision was adopted by the EPA.

If you are talking about pollution from fires, it is from wildfires, uncontrolled wildfires. As I have pointed out, if they are interested in looking it up, it is clear that we reduce air pollution by having these prescribed burns.

The other thing they keep talking about is public health. Most of these wildfires occur in rural areas. The Republicans in the Working Families Tax Cut Act put in \$50 billion to transform rural healthcare, and every one of my Democratic colleagues voted against it. The State of Oregon got \$197.3 million this year. Again, I am just at a loss to understand where they are coming from on some of this. It is in direct conflict with what the science shows.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER.)

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the FIRE Act.

This bill ensures that actions taken to prevent wildfires, such as prescribed burns, are not used to penalize a State when determining nonattainment. Under the FIRE Act, States will no longer miss nonattainment status solely for trying to reduce the impact of wildfires through wildfire mitigation activities.

□ 1340

Nonattainment status has significant consequences. New or expanding businesses in the State would face more restrictions, tougher permitting, and expensive pollution control measures that would cause economic development to move to States without nonattainment status.

Since EPA allowed prescribed burns to qualify for exceptional events, only one prescribed fire has been granted an exceptional events exemption. These concerns aren't hypothetical. They are measurable and prevent States from engaging in wildfire mitigation.

This is the epitome of commonsense legislation. Why should American businesses and workers be penalized for efforts to reduce air pollution? Again, I ask you: Why should American businesses and workers be penalized for efforts to reduce air pollution?

A recent study found that wildfires are reversing the progress made in air quality by this country over the last 40 years. Prescribed burns produce only a tenth of the PM 2.5 produced by wildfires.

Prescribed or controlled burns are our greatest and most effective tool for preventing wildfires. By discouraging wildfire mitigation, this outdated provision in the Clean Air Act undermines efforts to improve air quality.

Hopefully, improving air quality and reducing the devastating impact of wildfires is more important to the

Members of this Chamber than thwarting Congress' efforts to make necessary updates to outdated provisions of the Clean Air Act.

Legislation like the FIRE Act and my bill, the CLEAR Act, will modernize the Clean Air Act to work in the 21st century, protecting us from pollution without strangling business development and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend Representative EVANS for introducing this bill, and I urge its immediate adoption.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Ms. STANSBURY).

Ms. STANSBURY. Mr. Speaker, it is Earth Day tomorrow, and yet here we are today in front of the House Chamber with yet another bill attacking our fundamental environmental health bills.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here in strong opposition to H.R. 6387, the FIRE Act, but more importantly, I rise in fierce defense of the environmental laws that protect our people and our planet. Because on Earth Day, instead of celebrating progress, we are watching a coordinated effort to dismantle the very safeguards that generations of Americans, Democrats and Republicans, have put in place.

The Clean Air Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act are all on the chopping block this week of all weeks.

They are the reason our air is safer to breathe, our water is cleaner to drink, and our national heritage still exists for us today and for future generations. These laws were not passed in this Chamber lightly. They were enacted with overwhelming bipartisan support because leaders on both sides of the aisle understood something fundamental, that protecting the public health, that protecting the environment, that protecting planet Earth is not a partisan issue, but it is a patriotic duty.

They created a simple but powerful framework: follow the science, measure honestly, inform the public, and give communities the opportunity to weigh in.

Today, that framework, and so many of our environmental laws, are being systematically weakened here, bill by bill, loophole by loophole.

Today, the FIRE Act is another clear example of that approach as this bill does not actually reduce pollution but changes the way we measure it by expanding what qualifies as an exceptional event like heat and drought, allowing States to exclude air pollution from official records.

These are not rare anomalies anymore. This is the very heart of climate change evident in the data itself. Instead of addressing the crisis, this bill is trying to erase it by obscuring it in the data, in the science.

Why does this matter? Because accurate data is the foundation for every protection we have under our environmental laws. It determines whether our

communities can meet basic standards, whether it is safe for us to be outside, whether it is safe for us to drink water, whether it is safe for us to consume products, whether it is safe for us to continue to protect the fundamental basis of our natural ecological heritage.

Whether it is bypassing environmental review under NEPA, rolling back species protections under the Endangered Species Act, or trying to redefine the very foundation for how we carry out the Clean Air Act, as this bill does, the result is the same: less accountability, more risk for Americans, and chipping away piece by piece at the protections that generations before us fought for in this body to protect the planet and our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say, especially in 2026 as our communities are not only facing more intense heat waves but some of the most catastrophic snowpack and drought conditions certainly in my lifetime, this is not a time to be rolling back environmental protections.

Let's be honest about who this is really about. It is not for the American people. It is not for families who are worried about whether or not their children will be able to breathe. It is not for the communities that are on the frontlines of climate change. It is not for the people of this planet and this country. It is for powerful interests, industries that have worked to weaken protections and avoid accountability.

This week, on Earth Day week, we have a choice: Do we stand with the bedrock laws that have protected this country and our communities for decades? Do we uphold the bipartisan legacy of our air, our land, our wildlife, and our water, or do we walk away from it?

I will tell you this, Mr. Speaker: I stand with science, with our communities, and with our future generations.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am amazed at what my Democratic colleagues say about these issues as far as quoting data. The data shows, as I have already pointed out, that the emissions from controlled burns, from prescribed burns, could be as low as 17 percent of what would come from a wildfire.

As a matter of fact, controlled burns consume one-sixth of the fuel per acre as an intense wildfire. As I pointed out numerous times about my Democratic colleagues and their talking about what they want to do for healthcare and worried about people's health, we put \$50 billion into the Working Families Tax Cut Act to help rural healthcare, to transform rural healthcare. Every one of my Democratic colleagues voted against it.

As a matter of fact, the State of New Mexico received \$211.5 million, and they voted against it.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. KENNEDY).

Mr. KENNEDY of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Colorado and my friend from Alabama for the opportunity to speak in favor of the FIRE Act. I appreciate the important work that is being done, which is critical for my home State of Utah.

Last year, Utah saw over 1,000 wildfires burn 160,000 acres. I represent a district that has watched wildfires tear through our communities. I have seen what fire does to our land, and I have heard from the land managers, the ranchers, and the State officials who want something done about it.

In many cases, we actually know what to do about it. We know what steps we can take to mitigate the risk, how to proactively manage the land before a fire even begins. The problem isn't the will or the answers. The problem is too often the regulations. It is regulations that actually limit our ability to take the steps needed to protect ourselves.

The FIRE Act gives States the regulatory certainty they need to act before fires grow out of control, and it has my full support.

Mr. Speaker, the communities I represent cannot afford continued inaction. I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of the FIRE Act.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. TONKO), who is the ranking member of our Environment Subcommittee.

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I completely understand that many State and local governments are dealing with severe air pollution related to wildfires, but as we approach Earth Day, it is important for us to recognize that efforts like the Clean Air Act should be continued to be implemented to the fullest and even enhanced where necessary.

I will be crystal clear: The Clean Air Act already allows States to submit data for air pollution caused by exceptional events, preventing these emissions from penalizing them when determining compliance with air quality standards. Now, exceptional events are events that are typically uncommon and not easily within the State's control.

□ 1350

Air pollution due to wildfires, including prescribed burns for wildfire mitigation, can definitely count as exceptional.

In 2019, EPA issued guidance addressing how prescribed fires can satisfy the statutory definition of "exceptional events." In 2024, EPA issued a number of other tools to assist States in meeting the regulatory requirements.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that this guidance does require States to take steps to allow prescribed burns to qualify as an exceptional event, including making certain that appropriate mitigation and monitoring measures are taken to reduce risks to people in a given area.

If Members of the majority stop to think about this for a moment, they would appreciate the need for such guidance. Not every man-made fire should be able to qualify automatically as an exceptional event.

EPA's requirements ensure that States are doing everything possible to follow best practices and limit health risks from prescribed fires that cause unsafe air quality. Yet, despite the bill's name, eliminating these safeguards for prescribed burns isn't the only change to the Clean Air Act included in this order of legislative change.

The FIRE Act allows and greatly expands what could be considered an exceptional event in the first place, including meteorological conditions that are commonly occurring, such as high-temperature days and drought, which tend to have worse air quality. We know that these types of days are becoming more common due to climate change, meaning that this bill would make it much easier for States to essentially write off air pollution on days with increasingly normalized conditions. It is just a poor sense of timing for this bill to arrive on the scene.

Exceptional events should be limited to things that are truly exceptional. It is critical that during high-temperature and low-precipitation times, days that are more likely to experience poor air quality, we are still seeking to protect people.

Exempting prescribed fire activities from air quality standards, not to mention the other commonly occurring conditions that would be considered exceptional under this bill, simply does not protect public health.

This bill is seeking to legislate a quick fix that papers over legitimate pollution-reduction issues. Instead, we should build upon the existing law and EPA's efforts to bring together partners from the Federal, State, and local levels to work together to reduce wildfire risks, including addressing climate change, while also mitigating risks to public health.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to oppose this bill.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. EVANS).

Mr. EVANS of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I personally thank the chairman for his leadership and partnership on this legislation and Congress' broader efforts to modernize the Clean Air Act.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of my bill, the bipartisan Fire Improvement and Reforming Exceptional Events Act, or FIRE Act for short. This commonsense bill ensures that States like Colorado are not punished for smoke and emissions that they cannot control while still maintaining strong environmental protections and incentivizing good forest management practices to prevent wildfires.

The Front Range of Colorado has consistently struggled to meet ozone

attainment levels set by the Federal Clean Air Act, despite the fact that data and science show that more than 70 percent of emissions originate from sources outside of Colorado.

My mission when I came to Congress was to find a streamlined, nonpartisan solution to this problem, to cut red tape, and to help lower costs and protect the economy for my constituents.

My proposal simply clarifies how emissions from wildfires, prescribed burns, and other exceptional events are treated in Federal air quality reviews. It maintains environmental protections that benefit Americans while allowing States the flexibility that they need to comply with the Clean Air Act without needlessly enacting punitive regulations on the economy, job creators, and consumers.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle argue that this bill is unnecessary because there is already enough flexibility under the Clean Air Act for exceptional events and prescribed burns. Allow me to address that.

Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago this week, four Western State Governors, two Republicans and two Democrats, including my Governor, Jared Polis, and the Democratic Governor from Arizona, sent a letter to President Biden highlighting challenges that Western States face in complying with the Clean Air Act and asking for greater flexibility.

I have the letter. Their number one request was for the Biden EPA to "identify how the exceptional events framework can more appropriately be implemented given increased wildfire activity and provide more consideration for the emissions benefits of wildfire mitigation strategies in reducing air pollution in the West and nationally."

Mr. Speaker, two Republican and two Democratic Governors agree that good wildfire mitigation reduces air pollution.

The FIRE Act does exactly this, and I am proud that it has been endorsed by the Western Governors' Association, whose members range from Greg Abbott to Gavin Newsom.

Additionally, 3 years ago, 25 Democratic Members from California, including both current Senators, wrote to the EPA under President Biden, claiming that the Clean Air Act, as written, jeopardizes their State's ability to deploy prescribed burns and comply with the Clean Air Act.

Part of the letter reads: "While we appreciate the possibility that our concerns could be addressed through the use of EPA's exceptional events rule, the reality is that this process is unworkable for the scale of prescribed fire that will be necessary to protect our communities from increasingly catastrophic wildfires. The exceptional events rule is specifically designed for 'unusual or naturally occurring events that can affect air quality but are not reasonably controllable.' This simply does not describe prescribed fires."

Mr. Speaker, legislation like the FIRE Act has been asked for time and again by Members of both parties, and it is why I am so proud to lead this bill alongside my good colleague, ADAM GRAY, a California Democrat.

Mr. Speaker, while I have heard that some claim that the bill is unnecessary and accomplishes nothing, I have heard others say that the bill would do too much and fill our air with pollution. This also could not be further from the truth. As the father of a son who struggles with asthma, no one wants clean air more than I do. I want a healthy environment for all Coloradans and all Americans.

That is why this bill is narrowly tailored to maintain strong environmental protections. It actually reduces negative health outcomes that result from catastrophic wildfire smoke by encouraging more mitigation practices that reduce emissions through better wildfire prevention.

I will illustrate this point. A 2024 report compiled by fire experts and Tribal leaders asserts that the severe health and economic harms of wildfire smoke are “largely neglected, if not inadvertently caused by Clean Air Act regulations themselves.”

I would also add that, under current law, working families are penalized for emissions that they are not responsible for, which leads to unemployment and higher costs—in a word, poverty. Poverty also worsens health outcomes.

The FIRE Act is a commonsense, bipartisan solution to existing air quality regulations, and it is sorely needed. That is why the bill has been endorsed by more than 25 different national, State, and local organizations that transcend industries, interests, and partisan divides. It protects the environment and promotes clean air by cutting red tape and allowing us to do a better job of reducing fuel loads and reducing damaging emissions from wildfire smoke.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, Representative GRAY, for his support and leadership, as well as the chairmen of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations for all of their work advancing this bill. I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of the FIRE Act.

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

Mr. Speaker, I need to respond to the comments made by the gentleman from Colorado. The EPA promulgated an exceptional events rule in 2016 to allow States and Tribes to use prescribed burns for fire management and exempt emissions from wildfire from regulatory requirements. This was reinforced by a 2025 EPA memo titled “EPA Policy on Provisions to Allow Wildland Prescribed Fire in Clean Air Act State Implementation Plans.”

This bill is unnecessary, and I am going to repeat that. Republicans are claiming that the process is so burdensome and that very few determinations

are made by the EPA. That is misleading. The value of prescribed burns is to mitigate wildfire and to minimize air quality impacts on communities.

□ 1400

That is why forest managers conduct prescribed burns under particular weather conditions. Under these conditions, prescribed burns do not contribute significantly to the area’s ambient air quality, which means an exceptional event demonstration may not be necessary in the first place.

Proponents of this bill have lots of complaints about the current program. However, the FIRE Act does nothing to reform the exceptional event demonstration process for States or the EPA. Instead, it just provides broad exemptions, which is not what should be done.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PALMER. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. EVANS).

Mr. EVANS of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I want to briefly respond.

One exceptional event waiver has been approved, clearly not workable. As was just discussed, bipartisan Governors—two Democrats from Colorado and Arizona, and two Republicans from Utah and Wyoming—wrote a letter in 2024 saying that this exceptional event process, as it is currently written under the Clean Air Act, is not workable.

Madam Speaker, while I greatly appreciate references to a 2016 letter, this is a problem that was still impacting folks in 2024, prompting a bipartisan outcry from Western Governors on both sides of the aisle to modernize the exceptional events waiver—the same thing from members of the delegation from California.

In a letter in June 2023, 25 Members signed a letter saying that the exceptional events waiver is not workable, asking for these updates and for modernization. That is borne out by the data and by the science, which say that we have only had one exceptional events waiver approved.

The science is clear. The data is clear. The environment is crying out for reducing emissions through better forest management and wildfire prevention, which, as we have heard, reduces emissions anywhere on a scale from 1 to 6 to 1 to 10. If you do the controlled burns and the mitigation now, you have fewer emissions from damaging wildfires in the future.

Madam Speaker, I urge an “aye” vote.

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

Mr. PALMER. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. CRANK).

Mr. CRANK. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Alabama, and I thank my colleague from Colorado (Mr. EVANS) for sponsoring this bill.

Colorado, my home State, is facing years of severe drought. Last year, Colorado saw one of the worst wildfire seasons since 2020, with more than 200,000 acres burned statewide.

This past winter didn’t deliver the snowpack that Colorado relies on to help tamp down that wildfire risk. As many Coloradans already expect, this year could be even worse.

At the same time, wildfire mitigation has not been carried out at the pace or scale needed to reduce the risk of catastrophic fires. Across the West, wildfires are becoming more intense. They are destroying homes and businesses, damaging soil and watersheds, and making it harder for the land to recover.

Of course, they produce more emissions, and that creates a real problem for States like Colorado that are struggling to maintain compliance with the Federal air quality standards.

Along the Front Range, ozone levels already exceed Federal limits, and wildfire smoke has contributed to some of the highest ozone days on record. Yet, the EPA’s current process for handling wildfire emissions does not provide States with enough certainty to secure exemptions for these so-called exceptional events.

In fact, some of Colorado’s highest ozone readings have been driven by wildfire emissions, pollution that is entirely outside the State’s control. If those wildfire days were excluded in 2024, Colorado’s highest ozone reading would have been 73 parts per billion instead of 88, well within the Federal standard of 75.

Without these exemptions, States and local communities are forced to bear the consequences of nonattainment, whether that means new regulatory burdens, higher costs for consumers, or barriers for businesses trying to operate and grow.

It also makes it harder to carry out the very actions that would reduce wildfire risk in the first place. Prescribed burns, one of the most effective tools we have, become more difficult because their emissions count against compliance.

Research from Stanford University shows that prescribed burns can reduce wildfire severity by 16 percent and net smoke pollution by an average of 14 percent. That is backward.

I am proud to cosponsor the FIRE Act, led by my colleague, GABE EVANS, which brings much-needed clarity to how the Clean Air Act treats wildfire emissions and ensures that States aren’t penalized for taking proactive steps to reduce risk. We should not have environmental policies that lead to worse environmental outcomes.

Right now, by discouraging prescribed burns, we are making it harder for States like Colorado to do proper fire mitigation. We are contributing to more emissions, not less, and that just doesn’t make sense.

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his leadership on this issue,

and I urge my colleagues to support the FIRE Act.

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, in closing, the FIRE Act is a bad faith attempt by Republicans to let industry pollute without consequence under the guise of expanding the use of prescribed fire.

In reality, it would allow everyday occurrences, like hot days and droughts, to be excluded from air quality determinations. We know that these events are occurring more often and with more intensity. Excluding these now common events all but ensures that communities across the country will continue to breathe unhealthy air and suffer the health consequences.

The Clean Air Act is one of the most successful laws to protect Americans ever enacted by Congress because it prioritizes public health and gives States flexibility to foster economic growth simultaneously.

We have made significant progress, but still too many people live in areas with dangerous air pollution. Every year, over 100,000 Americans die prematurely as a result of air pollution. Doctors and scientists widely consider fine particulate matter to be one of the most toxic air pollutants, as it can cause asthma, COPD, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.

We can't ignore the broader political landscape in which we are considering this bill, either. Earlier this year, EPA announced it will no longer consider the benefits of protection of public health when developing new rules for particulate matter and ozone pollution. Instead, EPA will consider only the compliance costs for industry. That makes it even more important that any Clean Air Act legislation taken up by Congress ensures that public health protections remain at the center of the law.

The American people are asking us to lower healthcare costs. They are asking us to ensure that our families have safe water to drink and healthy air to breathe. Our responsibility is to them, but our Republican colleagues seem to only answer to their corporate polluter buddies who are asking for regulatory rollbacks to save a few dollars. That is just a bad deal for the American people.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote against this dirty air bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PALMER. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, once again, I want to point out some of the inconsistencies in the argument.

They have talked about healthcare, and I pointed out three or four times already that Congress put \$50 billion into the Working Families Tax Cuts Act specifically to modernize and improve rural healthcare. They are largely the ones who suffer the most from uncontrolled wildfires. Every Member

of the Democratic side of the aisle voted no.

I pointed out before that they talk about impact on senior citizens. This year, 51.4 million senior citizens paid no income tax on their Social Security. However, every one of my Democratic colleagues voted against that.

They talk about families. In the Working Families Tax Cuts Act, Congress eliminated taxes on tips. These are some of the hardest working people in the country living largely off of tips. I think, on average, they are going to get about \$3,000 back. That could be used to buy needed school supplies for their children, to pay a bill, to maybe even make a repair on an automobile, or to improve their housing, which is one of the leading factors in asthma.

□ 1410

According to the CDC, there is no single definitive known cause for the development of asthma but indoor air quality is a significant factor that is related to housing. This is what troubles me about the opposition to this bill. The science, the data, shows that controlled burns mitigate the intensity of wildfires. It reduces the amount of emissions into the atmosphere. This is a way to improve air quality, not make it worse.

They cite climate change in the frequency and intensity of wildfires. That is exactly what we are trying to mitigate against by doing these prescribed burns.

I am amazed at how many of the policies that they propose stifle the formation of new businesses, providing more jobs and better opportunities for families when the data, particularly on this issue, is clear. This is good for the local communities. It is good for air quality.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 6387, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. MALLIOTAKIS). All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1174, the previous question is ordered on the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Ms. DEXTER. Madam Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Ms. Dexter of Oregon moves to recommit the bill H.R. 6387 to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

The material previously referred to by Ms. DEXTER is as follows:

Ms. Dexter moves to recommit the bill H.R. 6387 to the Committee on Energy and Commerce with instructions to report the

same back to the House forthwith, with the following amendment:

Add at the end the following:

SEC. 3. LIMITATION.

This Act, and the amendments made by this Act, shall not take effect until the date on which the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in consultation with the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, publishes a certification that implementation of this Act, and the amendments made by this Act, will not increase, including for vulnerable populations such as seniors, children, and minority and low-income communities, any of the following:

- (1) Asthma attacks.
- (2) Hospitalization and emergency room visits for those with respiratory disease or cardiovascular disease.
- (3) The risk of preterm birth, babies born with low birth weight, or impaired fetal growth.
- (4) The risk of heart attacks, stroke, or premature death.
- (5) Reproductive, developmental, or other serious harms to human health.
- (6) The costs of health care treatment for respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, or any other serious disease or condition.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XIX, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the yeas appeared to have it.

Ms. DEXTER. 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 question are postponed.

RESIGNATION FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation from the House of Representatives:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 21, 2026.

Hon. Mike Johnson,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: I hereby resign my office from the 119th Congress as Representative for Florida's 20th Congressional District, effective Tuesday April 21, 2026; 1:30pm.

It has been the honor of my lifetime to serve the people of my district. I remain proud of the work we have accomplished on behalf of our communities.

After careful reflection and prayer, I have concluded that it is in the best interest of my constituents and the institution that I step aside at this time.

I remain committed to supporting a smooth transition and ensuring continuity of service for the district.

Sincerely,
SHEILA CHERFILUS-McCORMICK,
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 21, 2026.

Hon. Ron DeSantis,
Governor of Florida,
Tallahassee, FL

DEAR GOVERNOR DESANTIS: I write to inform you of my resignation as United States