

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO THE WESTERN BALKANS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 119-166)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the Western Balkans that was declared in Executive Order 13219 of June 26, 2001, under which additional steps were taken in Executive Order 13304 of May 28, 2003, which was expanded in scope in Executive Order 14033 of June 8, 2021, and under which additional steps were taken in Executive Order 14140 of January 8, 2025, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2026.

The acts of extremist violence and obstructionist activity, and the situation in the Western Balkans, which stymies progress toward effective and democratic governance and full integration into transatlantic institutions, outlined in these Executive Orders, continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Therefore, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared in Executive Order 13219 with respect to the Western Balkans.

DONALD J. TRUMP.  
THE WHITE HOUSE, June 22, 2026.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

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#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARIDOPOLOS) at 2 o'clock and 32 minutes p.m.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair

will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

#### EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2025

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 629) to amend the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 to remove barriers to agricultural producers in accessing funds to carry out emergency measures under the emergency conservation program, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 629

*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 "Emergency Conservation Program Improvement Act of 2025".

#### SEC. 2. IMPROVING THE EMERGENCY CONSERVATION PROGRAM.

Section 401 of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2201) is amended—

(1) in subsection (b)—

(A) in the subsection heading, by inserting "AND OTHER EMERGENCY CONSERVATION MEASURES" after "FENCING";

(B) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by inserting "or for other emergency measures to replace or restore farmland or conservation structures requiring an immediate response (as determined by the Secretary)," after "replacement of fencing"; and

(ii) by striking "option of receiving" and all that follows through the period at the end and inserting the following: "option of receiving, before the agricultural producer carries out the repair, replacement, or restoration—

"(A) with respect to a payment to the agricultural producer for a replacement, 75 percent of the cost of the replacement, as determined by the Secretary; and

"(B) with respect to a payment to the agricultural producer for a repair or restoration, 50 percent of the cost of the repair or restoration, as determined by the Secretary."; and

(C) in paragraph (2), by striking "60-day" and inserting "180-day"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(c) WILDFIRE DETERMINATION.—A wildfire that causes damage eligible for a payment under subsection (a) includes—

"(1) a wildfire that is not caused naturally, if the damage is caused by the spread of the wildfire due to natural causes; and

"(2) a wildfire that is caused by the Federal Government.".

#### SEC. 3. IMPROVING THE EMERGENCY FOREST RESTORATION PROGRAM.

Section 407 of the Agricultural Credit Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 2206) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2), by striking "wildfires," and inserting "wildfires (including a wildfire that is not caused naturally, if the damage is caused by the spread of the wildfire due to natural causes, and a wildfire that is caused by the Federal Government).";

(2) by redesignating subsection (e) as subsection (f); and

(3) by inserting after subsection (d) the following:

"(e) ADVANCE PAYMENTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall give an owner of nonindustrial private forest land the option of receiving, before the owner carries out emergency measures under this section, not more than 75 percent of the cost of the emergency measures, as determined by the Secretary.

"(2) RETURN OF FUNDS.—If the funds provided under paragraph (1) are not expended by the end of the 180-day period beginning on the date on which the owner of nonindustrial private forest land receives those funds, the funds shall be returned within a reasonable timeframe, as determined by the Secretary."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. TOKUDA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 629, the Emergency Conservation Program Improvement Act of 2025, introduced by Senator FISCHER of Nebraska.

The Emergency Conservation Program and the Emergency Forest Restoration Program are two critical cost-share programs available to landowners following a natural disaster. Given the natural disasters we have witnessed, including wildfires, hurricanes, and flooding, these programs have remained critically important.

Wildfires continue to present significant challenges, especially in the West, due to their increasing intensity and the extensive number of acres burned each year. Forest managers and wildfire experts have predicted that 2026 will be a particularly challenging fire year. So far this year, we have already witnessed approximately 2.7 million acres burned in over 34,000 fires, and it is only June.

Recently, devastating wildfires have occurred in the plains of Nebraska, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas, instead of just being confined to the forest and mountains of the West. This year, we saw approximately 300,000 acres burn after multiple wildfires ignited in Oklahoma and Kansas this past February.

In addition, due to Hurricanes Helene and Milton, we have observed significant needs for emergency assistance resulting from the devastation in southeastern States, including the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. Natural disasters have inflicted great damage on private property across the country at no fault of the landowners.

Under ECP, landowners can receive both technical and financial assistance for repairs and restoration of land adversely affected by natural disasters, including floods, hurricanes, wildfires, and droughts. Additionally, EFRP provides financial assistance to nonindustrial private forest landowners to support recovery efforts following similar natural disasters.

While these programs are critical, participants have reported ongoing issues with payment delays and insufficient upfront assistance to cover the costs of urgent conservation needs.

To address this issue, S. 629 allows for advanced payments of up to 75 percent of the total project cost for both programs, clarifies eligibility for cost-share payments, and allows for a longer period for the use of ECP payments.

In addition, since receiving recommendations from both the Government Accountability Office and the USDA Office of Inspector General, USDA has indicated that the Department is taking actions to improve the integrity and the administration of ECP. Given the significant challenges that our producers and forest landowners are facing in the aftermath of recent natural disasters, as well as the increased risk of extreme fire damage this year, it is my hope that we can enhance this program's integrity, while also providing timely assistance to those in great need.

Mr. Speaker, I support this legislation and encourage my colleagues to vote favorably.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 629.

Keeping food affordable starts with keeping farmers in business. As natural disasters become more frequent and more devastating, bipartisan, bicameral legislation like this is exactly what our agricultural producers need.

Hawaii is still recovering from the Kona low storms that tore through our islands this spring, leaving behind damage that communities and producers will be rebuilding from for years to come.

I have walked farms across our State and seen firsthand the waterlogged fields, crops buried in mud, and equipment totally destroyed beyond repair. Our farmers are resilient, but resilience alone cannot pay the bills after disaster strikes.

Hawaii is far from alone. This year, producers across the country have faced devastating freezes, severe winter storms, flooding, drought, and wildfire. These events are no longer isolated incidents. They are becoming the reality of farming in America.

For many producers, the challenge isn't simply recovering from the disaster. It is finding enough cash on hand to begin recovery in the first place.

Today, even after USDA approves assistance, farmers are often forced to

pay costs up front and wait for reimbursement. For many family farms, that delay can mean the difference between recovery and closure. That is why this legislation matters.

Cash is king after a disaster, and flexibility is key. By extending advance payments, this bill helps ensure USDA programs can meet farmers and ranchers where they are and provide assistance when it makes the greatest difference, not months later, but when recovery work must begin.

□ 1440

If this authority had been available following the Kona low storms, eligible producers could have started rebuilding immediately instead of scrambling to find the resources needed to bridge the gap. They could have repaired damaged infrastructure, restored farmland, and returned fields to production sooner.

This is a practical, commonsense policy that recognizes a simple reality: When disaster strikes, recovery delayed is often recovery denied.

Passing legislation is only half the job. The disaster after the disaster would be enacting proactive policies like this while lacking the workforce needed to deliver them. USDA programs are only as effective as the workforce responsible for getting that help to farmers on the ground.

Since the start of this administration, the Farm Service Agency workforce has declined by more than 24 percent, while at least 158 county offices are operating without an FSA employee.

We cannot control Mother Nature. We cannot stop the next storm, drought, wildfire, or flood, but we can ensure USDA has the staffing capacity necessary to get assistance out the door quickly and efficiently when producers need it most.

Our farmers and ranchers are not asking for a handout. They are asking for a fighting chance to recover, rebuild, and continue producing the food, fuel, and fiber our country depends on.

Let's give USDA the tools they need to meet this big challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support S. 629. I thank my colleagues for their strong support of this bipartisan, bicameral legislation.

Before we vote, I want to reflect on why this matters. When the Kona low storms swept across Hawaii this spring, they left farms flooded, infrastructure damaged, and producers facing months of costly recovery. Many are still working to restore their operations today.

Even as that work continued, a 6.0 earthquake struck our island chain just last month, less than a month ago, damaging roads and water systems on Hawaii Island, our State's largest agricultural producer.

It is a reminder that disaster doesn't wait for recovery to finish before the next challenge arrives. Whether storms, drought, wildfire, or earthquakes, our producers are increasingly

operating in a world where disruption is becoming the norm rather than the exception.

That is why S. 629 is so important. This bill recognizes that timing matters. For farmers and ranchers trying to get back on their feet, access to resources when recovery begins can make all the difference in how quickly they can restore production and keep their operations viable.

While the need is clear, success depends on more than good policy alone. Congress can provide USDA with the right tools, but those tools must be backed by the workforce needed to put them into action. Passing legislation without the capacity to implement helps no one.

We cannot prevent every disaster that comes our way, but we can make sure the Federal response is faster, more flexible, and better equipped to support the people who grow the food we depend on.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to strongly support S. 629, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to thank my colleague for her efforts on this piece of legislation and on the floor today.

The challenges that this bill is designed to address are real, and they are not just one particular locality, whether it is Hawaii, various States on the East or West Coasts, or across the country. We need to pass this legislation to make the process work more efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to vote for this piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 629.

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

#### NATIVE AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7396) to establish an Office of Native American Affairs within the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7396

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