

hours a week to just one report or program or assessment, we take that time away from the residents.

This bill does not aim to reform the entire model or oppress one party involved but, rather, aims to ensure that the time and thousands of dollars spent on assessments here and there are absolutely necessary and that it ultimately benefits the residents in these units. So this bill really does what Congress oftentimes fails to do, which is to provide some much-needed regulatory relief. It simplifies, rather than complicates, the process.

I ask my colleagues to join me in this bipartisan effort to ensure that low-income families have a decent home, regardless of their location. This begins by giving agencies the resources and the flexibility they need to better serve their communities.

WATER CRISES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again rise to address the water crises that are facing not just California, but our Nation and throughout the world.

Today, global communities and business organizations have joined together, and the White House is holding a water summit to raise awareness of the 650 million people around the world who don't have access to safe drinking water, urging leaders to focus on ways in which we can increase access to safe, sanitary water. This is appropriate, but it is long overdue.

On the Web site, waterday.us, it states: "Water stress is the impact a lack of water has on a particular sector or population. Water stress affects nutrition, public health, environmental services, housing and urban growth, and national security."

□ 1030

And national security is directly related to our ability to grow food to ensure that American consumers are independent and have sufficient nutrition for their daily consumption.

Water, therefore, is a resource issue of the future not only for our Nation, but throughout the world. These impacts of not having a reliable and safe water supply are all too familiar for those of us who live in the San Joaquin Valley in California and my colleagues who represent that area.

So while I believe it is fitting and appropriate that we recognize that there is a nationwide and worldwide issue regarding our water resources and how we manage them—with the planet having 7 billion people last year and by the middle of this century another 2 billion, or 9 billion people—we need to look at both short-term and long-term comprehensive solutions to our water needs not just throughout the world, but here in the United States, specifically, in California.

So I find it extremely disappointing that California's San Joaquin Valley is not at the forefront of this discussion after 4 years of devastating drought.

While I empathize with those in Flint, Michigan, and other areas of the country, like those of us in the San Joaquin Valley, we have been facing water shortages for 4 years; it is getting much worse; and there is less national attention being focused on our plight.

In the valley, instead of lead poisoning due to the failure of all levels of government, as we have seen in Flint, Michigan, we are dealing with waters that have high nitrate levels in drinking water. In addition to that, in many places, we don't have access to water at all.

The solutions are clear. We need to increase Federal funding for infrastructure to build resiliency during drought periods and reduce the impacts of water quality using all the water tools in our water toolbox.

We need to increase coordination between local, State, and Federal agencies to reduce the impacts of communities impaired by water quality or a lack of access to water.

Finally, we need to increase our focus on ensuring that regulations, where they are in place, achieve their intended purpose while minimizing negative impacts that they have with contradictory results.

For instance, due to the decisions made by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Bureau of Reclamation is required to operate pumps in California's water system under what I believe are scientifically flawed provisions, biological opinions, which have lost, as a result, hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water.

This year, if the Federal agencies had operated within the flexibility provided even in those flawed biological opinions, San Joaquin Valley communities could have been provided an additional 2- to 300,000 acre-feet of additional water. In addition to that, that would have benefited over 400,000 households.

As a result of the drought and the inability to capture water that is flowing in the system, over 600,000 acres of prime productive agricultural land have gone unplanted, and we have seen families impacted. Families that literally do not have access to water have had to bottle in water.

There is a very certain human toll—the impact—that is taking place to provide highly uncertain benefits for species. This is unacceptable, it is avoidable, and it is immoral.

I urge the Federal agencies to take action to do experimental increases in pumping with increased detection and monitoring so we can find out if, in fact, delta smelt and salmon traveling through the delta are even being harmed by the exact pumping levels under discussion.

So while I appreciate the comprehensive plan the administration is trying

to implement to solve our Nation's water crisis, we need short-term solutions now so that farmers, farm workers, and farming communities in the San Joaquin Valley do not go without a water supply under the Federal project for a third year in a row.

Additionally, we must do everything possible to get Federal legislation passed and signed into law that would not only deal with our short-term needs, but to deal with our long-term needs as well. We passed the House bill last year.

We need to get Senator FEINSTEIN's bill passed so we can go to conference because, if the Federal agencies don't act—and they have not been doing the job that I would like to see them do—then Congress must act.

HONORING BERT STEPHEN CRANE, A BELOVED LEADER IN THE MERCED COMMUNITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. DENHAM) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the life of a beloved leader in the Merced community, Bert Stephen Crane. Bert passed away at the age of 84 on Sunday, March 13, 2016, surrounded by his loving family.

On November 29, 1931, Bert was born to fourth-generation California farmers and ranchers. Raised on a cattle ranch, he was up before the Sun and out until it came down. During his youth, Bert achieved the rank of Eagle Scout as a member of Boy Scout troop 101.

At Merced High School, Bert was the drum major in band and played basketball. After high school, Bert studied at Stanford University and obtained his bachelor of science degree in agricultural economics from UC-Davis.

During his college years, Bert met Nancy Magnuson, whom he fell in love with and later married in 1957. They remained married for over 58 years and raised three children who would follow the family tradition of ranching and farming.

Bert spent most of his life farming walnuts, which he ventured into in the early 1970s after his early career in the beef industry. Bert went on to own and operate a successful walnut-processing plant.

Bert lived an impressive and inspirational life. He was known to have ridden horses with Ronald Reagan, was extremely involved in the community, and had a passion for health care.

He led fundraising events for Mercy Hospital and was instrumental in the development of the Mercy Cancer Center. Bert served on the Merced County Planning Commission for 28 years. His service to his community, agriculture, and research is one of great respect and integrity.

Bert valued and treasured the time he was able to spend with his family above all else. He is survived by his loving wife, Nancy, and his three children and seven grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring the life of Bert Stephen Crane for his unwavering leadership and recognizing his accomplishments and outstanding contributions to the community. God bless him always.

HONORING JAMES "JIM" WEST, A BELOVED LEADER IN THE MODESTO COMMUNITY

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the life of a beloved leader in the Modesto community, James "Jim" West, who died at the age of 81 on Sunday, March 13, 2016, surrounded by his loving family.

Jim was born on January 22, 1935, to Donald and Ruby West. He grew up in the heart of the Central Valley, Modesto, California, and graduated from Modesto High School in 1953.

Jim furthered his education at Menlo College before attending Kansas State University, where he obtained his bachelor's degree in feed technology.

In 1958, Jim joined the thriving and successful company his grandfather had started in 1909, the J.S. West Milling Company. The family-owned business is known for their production of eggs, feed, and propane.

Through years of hard work and dedication, Jim became shareholder, secretary, and vice president of the J.S. West Milling Company board. Jim's reputation as an honest businessman helped build the J.S. West Milling Company's successful and trustworthy name.

Jim was also dedicated to improving the community he lived in. He was active in several industry and civic groups, most notably as president of the Pacific Egg and Poultry Association in 1993 and chairman of the American Egg Board in 1997.

He was an active member of the Western Poultry Scholarship and Research Foundation, Memorial Hospital Foundation, Delta Blood Bank, and Modesto Junior College Foundation. He was also a proud member of the Modesto Rotary since 1969 and later served as president.

Jim had a genuine love for the people and the community he worked tirelessly to help. He was known for his kindness, generosity, and strong family values. Succeeding Jim are his wife of 44 years, Jessie West, their two sons, and three daughters.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and recognizing the life of Jim West for his unwavering leadership, many accomplishments, and contributions to the community. God bless him always.

NASCC 75TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FARENTHOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Naval Air Station at Corpus Christi as it celebrates its 75th anniversary this month.

NASCC or, as it was once known, the University of Air, has been training pi-

lots, navigators, aerologists, gunners, and radio operators since 1941.

NASCC was founded in 1938 under the 75th Congress to train new pilots and technical crew to bolster our Nation's air forces. The air base serves the southeastern portion of the United States, from Texas to Florida, and trains naval aviators nationwide along with other pilots from our foreign allies.

Today NASCC is not just a naval base. It includes tenant commands for the U.S. Army, Coast Guard, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The Corpus Christi Army depot rebuilds and updates rotary winged aircraft—helicopters—and is saving our country millions of dollars. The depot facility and other tenants make the base extremely cost effective for both the Army, Navy, and taxpayers.

The Department of Homeland Security and Customs and Border Patrol operate a variety of aircraft from the base, including predator drones surveilling our border, which is great because we have a new generation of pilots interacting with UAVs getting their training at NASCC.

NASCC's current commander officer is Captain Randolph F. Pierson, who joins a long line of leaders to serve in Corpus Christi.

During World War II, it was said there wasn't a naval aviator who hadn't earned their wings at the air station. These World War II naval aviators were critical members of the U.S. military, giving the U.S. an edge in battles across the Pacific and over Europe with our superior air power.

It was American air power, combined with U.S. naval power, that played a critical role in turning back the tide of Japanese at the Battle of Midway.

It was American air power that dealt a decisive blow against the Japanese in the Battle of the Philippine Sea, winning one of the last largest air battles in history.

After World War II, it was American air power that flew food supplies to the starving people of Berlin during the Berlin Airlift.

This was all accomplished with graduates of the Corpus Christi University of Air, NASCC.

Today the training program is approximately 18 months and, due to the increased complexity of modern aircraft, it just takes longer. Six hundred people per year are trained at the facility and go on to serve their country in the U.S. Navy and Marines as pilots, engineers, and technical crew.

These folks learn skills through the program that propel them through a successful life in the military and a successful life in the private sector after their service ends.

Some of the notable flyers who have earned their wings at NASCC include former President George H.W. Bush, who was in the third graduating class. He was commissioned just 3 days before his 19th birthday.

Naval Air Station Corpus Christi graduates also include several Mem-

bers of Congress, including fellow Texas Representative PETE OLSON, Representative JOE WILSON of South Carolina, and Senator JOHN MCCAIN of Arizona.

Some NASCC grads are not content to remain in the blue skies of the Earth. Many astronauts who led the charge into space after getting their wings at NASCC include Neil Armstrong and John Glenn.

Other notable graduates include game show host Bob Barker, actor Tyrone Power, Vice Admiral James Stockdale, and Medal of Honor winner Edward "Butch" O'Hare.

The Navy's distinguished flying team, the Blue Angels, were headquartered in Corpus Christi until 1955. Today, CNATRA, the Chief of Naval Air Training, now Admiral Bull, based in NASCC, commands the Blue Angels.

The people of the United States owe much to the graduates of NASCC. These heroes have fought for our country since the construction of the base in 1941.

I believe it is important to not only honor the men and women in uniform who serve at bases like NASCC and those around the country, but also to honor their families and the civilian workers who make it all possible.

Due to its importance to our country during World War II and over the years until today, it is my privilege to let you know about NASCC.

After 75 years of operation, the Naval Air Station is still training pilots, still serving the country, and still being a symbol of pride to Texas and the entire Nation.

PUTIN'S INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. STEWART) for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEWART. Mr. Speaker, in the tumult of a Presidential election, a lot of important and newsworthy events don't get enough attention.

One such event last week was the Czech Republic's release of Ali Fayyad, a dangerous Hezbollah terrorist who was indicted in 2014 by the United States for conspiracy to kill officers and employees of the United States.

The United States had requested Mr. Fayyad's extradition to the United States, and the Czech courts had approved that extradition request. But the Czech Minister of Justice, who is aligned with Vladimir Putin, refused to honor that decision and released this terrorist.

Fayyad has deep ties with the Russian black market for weapons and was an adviser to the former President of Ukraine and a close ally of Vladimir Putin.

It appeared at one point that Mr. Fayyad was exchanged for several Czech nationals being held hostage in Lebanon, but journalists have since shown that the hostage situation was a sham staged by his family and defense team.