

I hear from constituents all the time about how difficult it is to access paper tax forms, let alone how hard it is to file their taxes. Every year, millions of people continue to file their taxes on paper, but, every year, the IRS continues to make this process even more difficult.

As the IRS has transitioned to preferring an electronic filing system, many of my constituents are getting left behind. Not everyone is easily able to get access to paper forms on their own. The response that my constituents receive when they ask for help from the IRS is that all of the forms are easily available online. Unfortunately, more than 25 percent of all Americans lack regular or easy access to the Internet, and over 50 percent of seniors do not own a computer. Other people just want to file by paper. We need to preserve this option.

Beyond the accessibility concerns, we hear more and more about the dangers of electronic data security and tax fraud—dangers which are exacerbated by e-filing. Many of my constituents want to avoid these threats to their personal information, and the IRS is actively hindering them from taking sensible precautions.

I actually introduced legislation—the PAPER Act—in this Congress, which would require the IRS to send filing instructions and tax forms in paper format if someone traditionally files his taxes by paper. This seems pretty easy to me. While many of my constituents have concerns about how complicated their taxes are or about how high their rates are, they want to pay their taxes. We should not be keeping them from doing so.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this simple resolution. I think, if the IRS would stop going after individuals about their politics, they would have plenty of money with which to send out the forms.

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

I respect the gentleman from Michigan, my colleague, who talks about it becoming more difficult. The reason it is more difficult to reach the IRS on the phone or to, perhaps, get the forms is due to the failure of the Congress, under the Republican majority, to provide adequate resources for customer service. That is the long and short of this.

When we had a chance, we did add several hundred million dollars to the IRS that one year, and service improved; but now it is relapsing again because the Republican majority here simply will not provide adequate resources to the government agency that is supposed to work with our taxpayers. Also, the IRS is supposed to do some work in auditing tax returns. Because of the lack of resources, now fewer than 1 percent of taxpayers have any auditing of what they present to the IRS.

I understand the concerns. What I do not understand is the realization that

you are the source, in large measure, of these concerns. Tomorrow, we will be debating bills that have a much greater impact in terms of the IRS and its employees. This is relatively innocuous, in part, because it is only a sense of Congress and because it is unlikely to pass the Senate. Even if it did, it would be nothing more than an expression of the sense.

□ 1430

What we really need are dollars and cents given to the IRS employees so that they can do the work they want to do so that the 50, 60, or whatever percent of the calls that come in never get through to those people who would like to respond to the people who are calling them.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mrs. NOEM. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the gentleman's points on reducing the IRS' budget over the last several years, and we have done that. In fact, we have done that in the environment of where we have seen the abuse that the IRS has wrought on this country.

We have seen the lavish parties, and the American people said it was unacceptable. We have seen the extreme bonuses that were paid to employees. We have seen the targeting of individual groups based on what they work on.

We had hoped that the reduction in spending would be a reminder to the IRS of who they are to be accountable to, which is to the hardworking taxpayers, and that it would be the perfect opportunity for them to identify their priorities of what they should be doing, which is helping and servicing taxpayers who are trying to comply with the law instead of targeting individuals and instead of stopping to answer phone calls.

He talked about only 50 to 60 percent of the phone calls being answered. I think only 38 percent of those phone calls are being answered. And then, even if they are answered at times, they are dropped out of courtesy because the IRS simply isn't there to answer the questions the taxpayers have.

Taxpayers are spending somewhere around 6 billion hours preparing their taxes, \$30 billion on computer programs and/or professional help to try to pay their taxes accurately so they can comply with the laws this country has in place.

The problem is that, by stopping this distribution of IRS publication 17, who we are harming the most are those who are disadvantaged, the elderly who don't have access to computers, the poor who don't have access to getting the kind of help that they need or have the funds to find and be able to pay professional tax preparers. That is who we hurt if we don't pass this bill today.

Let's help those who are disadvantaged. Let's make sure that they have the instructions necessary to pay their taxes accurately and on time. Let's reprioritize what the IRS should have

done to begin with when they were reminded what their job was. Let's support this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 673.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROHIBITING THE USE OF FUNDS BY INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE TO TARGET CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4903) to prohibit the use of funds by Internal Revenue Service to target citizens of the United States for exercising any right guaranteed under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4903

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

SECTION 1. PROHIBITION ON TARGETING BY THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE BASED ON THE EXERCISE OF FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS.

None of the funds made available under any Act may be used by the Internal Revenue Service to target citizens of the United States for exercising any right guaranteed under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from South Dakota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on H.R. 4903 currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise today, Mr. Speaker, in strong support of H.R. 4903, and I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN) for introducing the bill.

We live in a Nation that is founded on the idea of free speech. The government does not control our media. It does not control who we decide to associate with. We don't live in a place where we should have to think twice before supporting a group that aligns with their views or making their political beliefs known to others.

The heavy hand of the Federal Government should not control how an American shares their views. Yet, that is just what happened to nearly 300 groups that applied for tax-exempt status between 2010 and 2012.

These organizations were small gatherings of like-minded people who wanted to discuss their views and educate the public about those views. They filled out the necessary IRS paperwork to become tax exempt, as it is required by the law.

But months and even years after they applied, after answering intrusive questions, after providing mountains of documents, after having their activities monitored by IRS agents, after all of this, many of them still sat in IRS limbo.

During the investigation, the Ways and Means Committee staff reviewed upwards of 1 million documents and interviewed dozens of IRS and Treasury officials. This exhaustive, years-long investigation yielded the information that we now know, that 298 applications for tax-exempt status were put on hold. Over 80 percent of them were right-leaning and only 10 percent were left-leaning.

Thanks to the committee's investigation, we know that the former head of the IRS division that governs tax-exempt groups, Lois Lerner, was told that frontline agents noticed an uptick in groups referring to themselves with phrases like Tea Party. She said the Tea Party matter was very dangerous and suggested how to deny those applications.

We know she inserted herself into the supposedly nonbiased procedures that she had created. She then bypassed even those procedures and singled out certain taxpayers for additional scrutiny and audit.

We also know that the IRS bureaucracy in Washington went as far as setting up a surveillance program called a review of operations. In other words, an IRS unit in Dallas would monitor a group's activity, including their Internet postings, trying to build a case for an audit.

Over 80 percent of the groups that were flagged for this surveillance were right-leaning and, of the groups actually selected for the audit, Mr. Speaker, 100 percent of them were right-leaning.

When concerns about this activity reached Congress, my colleagues at Ways and Means asked multiple members of the IRS leadership about it. They assured the committee that all was well. We now know what was really going on.

When Lois Lerner finally admitted in 2013 that the IRS had targeted taxpayers based on their political beliefs, the President went on national television and promised to help Congress get to the bottom of the situation. He later changed his tune and blamed the targeting on a few rogue IRS agents.

If the Ways and Means investigation showed us anything, it is that the

wrongdoing happened nowhere else but in Washington, D.C., and that the IRS employees on the front lines were not to blame.

We must make sure that political targeting like this never happens again. By passing this bill to reaffirm American taxpayers' First Amendment rights, we take a step toward that goal.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, what is being prohibited here is already prohibited. It is prohibited in the law. It is prohibited by law that we passed in 1998.

It says that there shall not be action as to any taxpayer, taxpayer representative, or other employee of the IRS in violation of any right under the Constitution of the United States.

So maybe this bill is an effort to bring back the long discussion we had about the IRS procedures. I don't think this is the time to relitigate it.

I was there and you weren't, if I might say so. I thought maybe you would bring it up; so, I did go back to what happened.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would like to remind the gentleman to direct his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I will do that.

I decided to go back to 2013 to the hearing of Ways and Means. After the inspector general gave his report—this is May 17, 2013—this is what I asked the inspector general: Did you find any evidence of political motivation in the selection of the tax-exemption applications?

And the inspector said: We did not, sir.

Look, we could spend hours talking about what has happened to the rules regarding 501(c)(4)'s in this country. We could go back and discuss the abuse of the 501(c)(4) provisions. We could go back and look at how much political money is being poured into this process by 501(c)(4)'s.

We could go back and discuss what was the original language in the 501(c)(4) legislation that no political money could be used. Instead, it was interpreted decades ago that it relates to the majority must not be.

So what has happened is that 501(c)(4)'s—by the way, most of them are rightwing organizations, most of them.

Most of the money has come from rightwing organizations using the mask of 501(c)(4)'s to essentially, I think, pollute the democratic processes in this country. We shouldn't really be doing that. You raised it; so, I am responding.

What this bill does is simply say that the constitutional rights should essentially prevail, and I fully agree. It is already in the 1998 legislation. So let's move on. Let's not use vehicles for political purposes.

Look, we have so much more we could be doing today in terms of tax legislation. We have legislation relating to inversions. A number of us have introduced it.

We complain that the executive uses too much power. They have used their power relating to inversions up to, I think, a legitimate point and have said to us in the Congress that we need to go further—the Congress does—to address the problem of inversions in this country. Essentially, we do nothing. We do nothing about this.

There was talk earlier today about tax reform. We have heard this talking endlessly, and there is no product. There is no product whatsoever.

So this bill simply restates what is already in the 1998 law which we completely, completely embrace. So I suggest we just get on with our business and try to do real business.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from South Dakota.

Yesterday marked the deadline for all Americans to file their 2015 taxes, and Americans from all walks of life disclosed some of their most private information and handed over their hard-earned dollars to the government.

With this in mind, last week I was proud to introduce legislation prohibiting the use of funds by the IRS to target citizens for exercising their First Amendment rights. Americans have seen Federal agencies abuse their power, and the IRS is one of the worst offenders.

The IRS has specifically targeted conservative groups simply for being conservative. This is a direct violation of the First Amendment.

My bill preserves the integrity of the First Amendment by ensuring its protections are never compromised by unelected Federal bureaucrats.

Specifically, H.R. 4903 protects Americans by prohibiting use of funds by the IRS and its rogue bureaucrats to carry out government abuse on citizens for exercising their constitutional rights. I can think of nothing more despicable than persecution for beliefs.

Tax day is stressful enough with the Tax Code we have in place. The IRS has no business in striking fear into the hearts of Americans for expressing their strongly held beliefs and convictions.

The Constitution is the law of the land, whether the IRS likes it or not. We must hold the IRS and its unelected bureaucrats accountable, especially because they have overstepped their constitutional bounds before, as my colleague pointed out. My colleague on the other side may dispute our legislation, but they can't dispute the facts, Mr. Speaker.

My colleagues serving on the Oversight and Government Reform committee and the Ways and Means Committee have been investigating the

IRS' unlawful targeting of conservative groups since 2012. They were dogged in their pursuit of justice for every American's fundamental right, the freedom of speech.

The investigation revealed that, as a result of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, democratic leadership pressured IRS bureaucrats to fix the problem by taking an aggressive stance against political speech by tax-exempt entities.

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My colleagues also found clear evidence and testimony that the Tea Party and other conservative organizations were targeted for enhanced scrutiny because their organizations' names reflected their conservative beliefs.

For 27 months, from February 2010 until May 2012, the IRS systematically targeted conservative tax-exempt applicants for additional scrutiny and delay. This is an egregious violation of the First Amendment rights of all Americans.

The leader of this scheme was Lois Lerner, an IRS official at the time, as was mentioned.

In April 2010, a sensitive case report on the targeted Tea Party groups is shared with Lerner, when she first learned of a spike in Tea Party applications.

In June and July of 2011, Lerner is briefed that employees are using such terms as "Tea Party," "patriots," "9/12 Project," "government spending," "government debt," "taxes," and "make America a better place to live" to flag applications.

Lerner, after learning about such terms, tells the Cincinnati office to revise its guidelines for flagging applications. The guidance is expanded to include "organizations involved with political lobbying or advocacy for exemption under 501(c)(3) or 501(c)(4)."

Also, Lois Lerner's hard drive supposedly crashed that June, erasing 2 years worth of emails. How convenient was that?

In March 2012, DARRELL ISSA, then-chairman of the Committee on House Oversight and Government Reform, expressed concern to the IRS inspector general that Tea Party groups were being targeted by the IRS. Doug Shulman, IRS Commissioner at the time, vehemently denied on the record to Congress that the agency was targeting conservative groups.

In May 2013, Lois Lerner testified before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. She proclaimed her innocence before invoking her Fifth Amendment right and refusing to answer questions from lawmakers. For 2 more years, the IRS circumvented Congress' investigations.

Lois Lerner, time and time again, refused to cooperate with Congress in its investigation of targeting conservative groups and, instead, hid behind the Fifth Amendment.

Before I was elected to Congress, my colleagues in the House of Representatives rightly voted to hold Lois Lerner in contempt of Congress for her refusal to cooperate with ongoing investigations into the agency's special targeting of groups with "Tea Party" or "patriot" in their names that were seeking tax-exempt status.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, a decision to hold Lois Lerner in contempt of Congress was not taken lightly. Not surprisingly, the Obama administration's Department of Justice unilaterally decided not to prosecute Lois Lerner for her unlawful actions.

However, Congress vowed to continue to find answers and hold the IRS accountable for its actions. This is why I stand before you today. I refuse to allow another American to be persecuted and targeted by IRS bureaucrats for expressing their First Amendment rights, no matter their beliefs.

The House holds the power of the purse. As such, it is within our authority to gut the IRS where it hurts the most: their use of hard-earned tax dollars.

H.R. 4903 prohibits the IRS from using funds made available by any law to target citizens for exercising their First Amendment rights.

Today I urge my colleagues to stand with me to ensure that the IRS no longer oversteps its authority and supports the God-given constitutional rights of every American. No American should fear persecution from the government for expressing his or her strongly held beliefs and conviction.

Please join me in supporting H.R. 4903.

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

I thought maybe this bill was an excuse to try to relitigate this issue. I was among the first who suggested that Lois Lerner be relieved of her duties. I did so because of, I thought, the incompetent way it was handled, but not because there was any evidence of political motivation.

Again, I want to go back to the question I asked the inspector general in 2013: "Did you find any evidence of political motivation in the selection of the tax-exemption applications?"

Mr. George said: "We did not, sir."

So what has happened here is essentially getting up and reading a one-sided, often erroneous text, often conclusions that are not at all based on fact.

We really should not be relitigating this today. We should be acting on tax legislation, on the budget, and other necessary issues that face the people of this country.

I hope no one thinks that the passage of this bill will in any way imply on the part of any of us who have been involved with this on the Democratic

side that there is any substance to the attack that has been launched here on the IRS and conclusions that have been reached that are not founded on fact.

It is kind of sad. The 1998 law says no IRS employee may violate the constitutional rights of a taxpayer. That is absolutely clear. It is absolutely clear.

So with this, I want to express my regret that this bill is being used as a vehicle for strictly political purposes. Let's abide by the Constitution and the 1998 law. Let's also abide by the responsibilities of this Congress, and that is to act on critical legislation and not use a bill as a vehicle to try to go over once and once again a case where there is deep difference of opinion and often deep misstatement of facts.

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

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that what we are doing here today is ensuring that the IRS will never target Americans based on their political beliefs, on their First Amendment rights. This bill will just make sure that doesn't happen. Regardless of what the past was—and what is wonderful about the past and being at congressional hearings and taking part in them and serving on a committee or not serving on a committee is that they are public and that they are open, and that you can ask questions, and the general public at home can hear the answers that are given there.

Let me remind you that in 2013, Lois Lerner admitted that the IRS had targeted taxpayers based on their political beliefs. She said that the Tea Party matter was very dangerous. She suggested how to deny the applications. We know for a fact that she inserted herself into the supposedly unbiased processes that she had created and then bypassed even these procedures and singled out certain taxpayers for additional scrutiny and audit.

Do we think, really, that it was just a fluke that 100 percent of the audits and the groups that were selected for audit were right-leaning? I don't believe so, sir.

While that investigation may be over, it is still important to have discussions like this to reassure the taxpayers back home that this type of targeting will never happen, that we have legislation before us today that will stop some of the abuses that may have happened in the past and ensure that they won't happen in the future. That is why I am going to urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4903.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SERVICE PROVIDER OPPORTUNITY CLARIFICATION ACT OF 2015

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4284) to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to issue regulations providing examples of a failure to comply in good faith with the requirements of prime contractors with respect to subcontracting plans.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4284

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 “Service Provider Opportunity Clarification Act of 2015”.

SEC. 2. GOOD FAITH COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF PRIME CONTRACTORS WITH RESPECT TO SUBCONTRACTING PLANS.

Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall issue regulations providing examples of activities that would be considered a failure to make a good faith effort to comply with the requirements imposed on an entity (other than a small business concern as defined under section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632)) that is awarded a prime contract containing the clauses required under paragraphs (4) or (5) of section 8(d) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(d)).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Small Business Act requires that when large businesses receive Federal prime contracts, they must negotiate a subcontracting plan outlining who they intend to use as small business subcontractors. That plan becomes part of the contract, and the results are supposed to be part of the past performance evaluation for the prime contractor.

Indeed, failure to make a good faith effort to comply with the agreed-upon plan can trigger liquidated damages. Even though this has been the law for 38 years, the Small Business Administration has never explained what it means to fail to make a good faith ef-

fort to comply with a subcontracting plan.

This failure is a double-edged sword. For bad actors, it lets them off the hook. For good actors, it leaves ambiguity about what they are expected to do. It also forces companies that take their compliance obligations seriously to compete against bad actors who never even report the results of their plans.

Failure to report is a real problem. As many as 40 percent of the companies with subcontracting plans don't report any results. As a result, subcontracting dollars with small businesses are at the lowest point in over 40 years.

My colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CURBELO), who chairs the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy and Trade of the Committee on Small Business has a commonsense solution for this problem. H.R. 4284 requires the Small Business Administration to explain what it means to fail to make a good faith effort to comply with the plan. It further explains that failing to meet the most basic obligation of the contract term—reporting back on results—cannot be good faith.

The beauty of Mr. CURBELO's legislation is that it solves a problem without placing any new burdens on compliant contractors while still ensuring that the American taxpayer gets the benefits anticipated in the contract.

This legislation was included as part of a larger bill that passed the Committee on Small Business in January, and it received bipartisan support.

I urge my colleagues to support and pass H.R. 4284.

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

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

I rise in support of H.R. 4284, the Service Provider Opportunity Clarification Act of 2015. It has long been the policy of Congress to ensure that a fair proportion of Federal contracts, prime contracts or subcontracts, be awarded to small businesses. In some areas there has been success in advancing this goal. In fiscal year 2015, small prime contractors received over \$90 billion, amounting to over 25 percent of contracting dollars. As a result, the government, again, met its prime small business contracting goal.

However, prime contracting is only one part of the equation. For many small businesses, subcontracts are just as vital. These opportunities serve as an entry point for firms to the Federal marketplace.

Subcontracts are a way for firms to increase their capacity and prepare to eventually become prime contractors. Subcontracts also help entrepreneurs gain valuable insight into what is required when the Federal Government is your client.

Recognizing the importance of subcontracts, the Small Business Act requires that prime contractors submit subcontracting plans for contracts val-

ued at certain levels and SBA to set goals for subcontracting dollars awarded to small businesses.

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Yet, throughout the course of this Congress, our committee has heard testimony of countless witnesses indicating that not only are prime contractors not reporting their subcontracting dollars, but also that contracting officers are not holding these firms accountable for their subcontracting goals.

Even more egregious is the fact that some primes have been awarded contracts without a subcontracting plan at all. This is simply unacceptable.

The Service Provider Opportunity Clarification Act of 2015, introduced by Mr. CURBELO and Ms. CLARKE, seeks to rectify this problem by making the failure to submit the required subcontracting report a material breach, thus providing remedial options to agencies.

Procurement center representatives will also be allowed to review subcontracting plans and place a 30-day hold on the plan if they found that it did not adequately provide small businesses subcontracting opportunities.

Additionally, the bill requires that SBA update its regulations to give contracting personnel better examples of when prime contractors have acted in good faith compliance with the subcontracting plans.

These provisions will provide necessary oversight to ensure that prime contractors are adhering to subcontracting regulations and that small businesses are afforded maximum opportunity to participate in the Federal marketplace as a subcontractor.

I, therefore, ask my fellow Members to support this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CURBELO), who is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy, and Trade.

Mr. CURBELO of Florida. Mr. Speaker, last year I was proud to introduce the Small Entrepreneur Subcontracting Opportunities Act, or the SESO Act.

The bill would hold agency officials accountable for small-business subcontracting during their annual performance evaluations.

Subcontracting is an important entry point for new Federal contractors. If we have fewer subcontractors today, we will have fewer prime contractors tomorrow.

In turn, this would mean fewer small suppliers, manufacturers, and innovators and higher costs to the Federal Government and the taxpayers. We must ensure a healthy industrial base at all levels in our country.

I would like to thank Small Business Committee Chairman CHABOT and Armed Services Committee Chairman THORNBERRY for supporting that important language to hold agency managers