

truly been a champion—she is the founder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus—in fighting to end disparities in maternal care for women veterans. Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country. It is past time that we address this inequity.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support our women veterans and vote “yes” on H.R. 958.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), my good friend.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I thank Ranking Member BOST and Chairman TAKANO for their leadership. This bill is very important.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Protecting Moms Who Served Act, which I co-lead with my colleague and friend, LAUREN UNDERWOOD. I also thank Representative UNDERWOOD for her efforts on this bill to help ensure that all female veterans have access to the maternal healthcare and support they need and deserve.

Our Nation's heroes deserve the best possible care, and this legislation gets us one step closer to achieving that goal. Women are currently the fastest growing group within the veteran population, creating the greatest demand for maternity care ever faced by the VA.

I have heard from my local VA medical centers about the growing challenges they face in providing maternity coordination for female veterans. The demand on this maternity coordination process has significantly increased over the past few years, from an average of 50 patients per year to now around 140, featuring a generally higher risk patient population than the private sector.

My local veterans medical centers said that the additional program support and additional maternity care coordinators would be crucial in meeting the growing demand, which this bill will provide.

The bill will also provide community maternity care providers with training and support with respect to the unique needs of pregnant and postpartum veterans, particularly regarding mental and behavioral health conditions in relation to the service of the veterans in the Armed Forces—very important.

Madam Speaker, these veterans honorably served our country. It is only right that we provide the quality maternity care and support they deserve.

Madam Speaker, again, I urge my colleagues to support this particular bill.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. UNDERWOOD), my good friend and author of this bill, and a member of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 958, the Protecting Moms Who Served Act, my bipartisan bill to address maternal mortality among veterans that I

proudly introduced with Representative GUS BILIRAKIS and JULIA BROWNLEY and BRIAN FITZPATRICK.

Madam Speaker, the United States is currently confronting a maternal health crisis. We have the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world and significant racial and ethnic disparities in maternity health outcomes.

Some of the drivers of maternal mortality and morbidity can even be more common in women who serve. For example, one in three women veterans report that they experience military sexual trauma, which is linked with risk factors for pregnancy-related complications. With unacceptable maternal mortality rates for all U.S. mothers and unique risks for veterans, we must ensure that the VA is providing the highest quality maternal healthcare and support to moms who serve.

My bipartisan Protecting Moms Who Served Act would codify VA's maternity healthcare and coordination programs, which offers screenings and treatments to pregnant veterans with mental health conditions and include measures to strengthen community partnerships with organizations that support new parents.

The VA's maternity care coordination programs have been successful in ensuring that veterans can receive high-quality, culturally appropriate care and robust support throughout pregnancy, during labor and delivery, and for the full yearlong postpartum period and beyond. By codifying and strengthening these programs, veterans will continue to receive the world-class care and support that they have earned.

The Protecting Moms Who Served Act would also invest in trainings for community maternity care providers so that nurses, midwives, and physicians caring for pregnant and postpartum veterans understand the unique needs of veteran patients, particularly related to mental and behavioral health conditions that might have been caused or exacerbated by military service or the transition back to civilian life. These trainings will ensure that veterans receive care that is responsive to the lingering physical and psychological impacts of their service.

Finally, my bill will commission the first-ever comprehensive study of maternal mortality, morbidity, and racial and ethnic disparities for veterans. By having a complete understanding of the ways in which our Nation's maternity health crisis extends to our veteran population, we can develop evidence-based solutions to improve outcomes and save veterans' lives.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the Protecting Moms Who Served Act. I thank the chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Chairman TAKANO, for his leadership to advance this critically important bipartisan legislation—the first bill in our Black Maternal Health

Momnibus Act to be considered here in the House.

As a cofounder and co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Caucus, I am committed to advancing each bill in the Momnibus to save moms' lives and support families.

Madam Speaker, finally, I would also really like to thank—truly, it has been a pleasure to work with—Representative BILIRAKIS, Representative BROWNLEY, Representative FITZPATRICK, and Ranking Member BOST. Thank you for co-leading this bill with me.

Mr. BOST. Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I am delighted that we are taking this significant step in addressing the terrible mortality rates that we are facing among our Nation's moms, especially our moms of color. And to the extent that we can shed light on this issue through this very important legislation being brought forward by Ms. UNDERWOOD and Ms. BROWNLEY, I think that this is truly, truly a tremendous step forward.

Madam Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to vote in favor of this 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 California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 958.

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.

HAWAII NATIONAL FOREST STUDY

Mr. SOTO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 297) to require the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a study on the establishment of, and the potential land that could be included in, a unit of the National Forest System in the State of Hawaii, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 297

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

SECTION 1. HAWAII NATIONAL FOREST STUDY.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service.

(2) STUDY AREA.—The term “study area” means the islands of Hawaii, Maui, Molokai, Lanai, Oahu, and Kauai in the State of Hawaii.

(b) STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a study—

(A) to determine the suitability and feasibility of establishing a unit of the National Forest System in the study area; and

(B) to identify available land within the study area that could be included in the unit described in subparagraph (A).

(2) COORDINATION AND CONSULTATION.—In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) coordinate with the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources; and

(B) consult with the Hawaii Department of Agriculture and other interested governmental entities, private and nonprofit organizations, and any interested individuals.

(3) CONTENTS.—In conducting the study under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall—

(A) consider unique vegetation types that occur in the study area and that should be targeted for inclusion in the unit of the National Forest System described in paragraph (1)(A);

(B) evaluate the ability of the Secretary—
(i) to improve and protect forest areas within the study area; and

(ii) to secure favorable water flows within the study area;

(C) determine whether the unit of the National Forest System described in paragraph (1)(A) would expand, enhance, or duplicate—

(i) resource protection; and

(ii) visitor-use opportunities;

(D) consider parcels of an appropriate size or location to be capable of economical administration as part of the National Forest System separately or jointly with the other land identified under paragraph (1)(B);

(E) evaluate the willingness of landowners to sell or transfer land in the study area to the Secretary;

(F) evaluate the suitability of land in the study area for potential selection and designation as a research natural area or an experimental forest;

(G) identify cost estimates for any Federal acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance that would be needed to establish the unit of the National Forest System described in paragraph (1)(A); and

(H) consider other alternatives for the conservation, protection, and use of areas within the study area by the Federal Government, State or local government entities, or private and nonprofit organizations.

(c) EFFECT.—Nothing in this section authorizes the Secretary to take any action that would affect the use of any land owned by the United States or not owned by the United States.

(d) REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the House of Representatives a report that describes—

(1) the results of the study; and

(2) any conclusions and recommendations of the Secretary.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. SOTO) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 297, sponsored by my Committee on Natural Resources' colleague, Representative ED CASE of Hawaii.

Madam Speaker, this legislation would require the Secretary of Agriculture, in coordination with the Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources, to conduct a study to identify lands in the State of Hawaii that merit inclusion in the National Forest System.

Hawaii is one of the most ecologically diverse places in the world, home to 10 of the 13 world climate zones, with ecosystems ranging from the deserts to tropics, where plants and animals that found their way to Hawaii evolved like nowhere else. The study would consider how a Hawaii national forest could contribute to the conservation of this biodiversity not found elsewhere in the National Forest System.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 297 provides the first step in establishing a national forest in Hawaii and a basis for bringing together local stakeholders to move forward the conversation on how to responsibly establish a national forest in Hawaii that benefits both Hawaii's island communities as well as the National Forest Service.

Madam Speaker, as we continue to work towards the Biden administration's effort to protect 30 percent of U.S. lands and waters by 2030, and identify solutions to our climate and biodiversity crises, I hope we can all see the value in taking this step towards protecting Hawaii's unique forest resources and its native species.

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

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 297, offered by our Natural Resources Committee colleague, Congressman CASE from Hawaii. This bill is the first step toward the creation of Hawaii's first national forest.

This bill requires a study to identify potential parcels of land that could later be incorporated into a national forest that would help fulfill the National Forest System's mission.

Hawaii is one of the few States without a national forest and the only State that has tropical rainforests. Hawaii's rainforests are among the wettest places on Earth. This bill would help inventory how best to conserve and expand Hawaii's unique forests and lay the groundwork for the establishment of a national forest.

While I question my friends from Hawaii on why they would be interested in potentially giving the Federal Government jurisdiction over any land in Hawaii, especially considering the unfortunate state of our national forests on the mainland, I do urge adoption of

the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SOTO. Madam Speaker, I thank the ranking member for his positive comments.

Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Hawaii (Mr. CASE).

Mr. CASE. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 297, the bill that I have co-introduced with my colleague from Hawaii, Representative KAIALI'I KAHELE.

As Mr. SOTO and the ranking member have noted, this legislation would require the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the State of Hawaii, to conduct a study to identify lands in the State of Hawaii that merit inclusion in the National Forest System. This would be the first step in potentially establishing a national forest in one of the few parts of our country with no such system.

As my friend and colleague, Mr. SOTO, has noted, Hawaii is the most isolated island chain and one of the most ecologically diverse places in our world. Within our borders, we have 10 of the 13 world climate zones, ecosystems that range from the deserts to the tropics, where plants and animals that found their way to Hawaii evolved like nowhere else.

A 2014 survey identified 9,975 endemic species in Hawaii, many of which are reliant on Hawaii's fragile ecosystem, including our forests, to survive. However, since the onset of human arrival just centuries ago, Hawaii has lost almost half of its unique native forest cover and countless fauna and flora species.

Despite these threats to our unique biodiversity, Hawaii remains one of eight States that does not have a national forest or grassland. The study authorized by the bill would take steps to correct this oversight. It would consider how a Hawaii national forest could contribute to the conservation of this biodiversity not found elsewhere in our National Forest System while supporting the research mission of the Institute of Pacific Islands Forestry.

It would help inventory where Hawaii's native koa, ohia, and sandalwood forests can be conserved and expanded for cultural and commercial practices. It would help identify where cultural sites could be better conserved and access expanded to the public and practitioners. And it would help provide the basis to bring together local stakeholders to advance the conservation of how to responsibly establish a national forest in Hawaii in a manner that will benefit both our island communities and the National Forest Service.

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues in the Hawaii congressional delegation for their support. I thank the Committee on Natural Resources and Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands chairs, ranking members, members, and staff for their support and assistance in bringing this bill to the floor.

I take my ranking member's comments to heart. I certainly hope that this study will not only evaluate and investigate how we can create a national forest in Hawaii but how we can make that a model for how national forests can and should be administered throughout our country. I endorse his concerns as to the administration of our national forests and, certainly, would look forward to working with him in our subcommittee and committee.

As we continue to identify solutions to our climate and biodiversity crises, I hope we can all see the value in taking this step toward protecting our unique forest resources and their native species, along with providing important opportunities.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Madam Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SOTO. Madam Speaker, I thank the ranking member, Mr. WESTERMAN from Arkansas, for his positive comments and bipartisan spirit, and I thank Mr. CASE.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the 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 Florida (Mr. SOTO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 297.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mrs. GREENE of Georgia. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 3(s) of House Resolution 8, the yeas and nays are ordered.

Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion are postponed.

NATIONAL PULSE MEMORIAL

Mr. SOTO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 49) to designate the National Pulse Memorial located at 1912 South Orange Avenue, Orlando, Florida, 32806, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 49

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

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL PULSE MEMORIAL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Pulse Memorial located at 1912 South Orange Avenue, Orlando, Florida, 32806, is designated as the “National Pulse Memorial”.

(b) EFFECT OF DESIGNATION.—The national memorial designated by this section is not a unit of the National Park System and the designation of the National Pulse Memorial shall not require or permit Federal funds to be expended for any purpose related to that national memorial.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Florida (Mr. SOTO) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SOTO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the measure under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise, along with Representative DEMINGS and Representative MURPHY from central Florida, in strong support of our bill, H.R. 49.

Nearly 5 years ago, 49 angels lost their lives and 53 others were injured when a deranged gunman opened fire at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

You can see here photos of those who we lost, lives cut short.

This horrific act of hate and terror against our LGBTQ and Latino community, African-American community, and Anglo community could have divided us, but we came together stronger than ever before.

Orlando swore as a community to never forget those we lost that night. Their stories, their images, their memories, and their spirits must live on in our hearts.

We were all there for vigils in Orlando, where the bell rang 49 times for those angels we lost, and I am honored to say, across this Nation and all 50 States, and many countries, we saw vigils also recognizing it, which is why it is so critical that this is a national memorial, because it was truly a national and international tragedy.

To honor the fallen and survivors of this tragedy, I join my colleagues to introduce landmark legislation to designate the Pulse nightclub as a federally recognized national memorial site. This designation as a nonaffiliated National Park Service national memorial would not require Federal funds, but it would honor the 49 lives taken on June 12, 2016, as well as the survivors, the first responders who so heroically came to the rescue of so many others, and the entire central Florida community.

Together, we will open minds and hearts. We will make the Pulse Memorial a national symbol of hope, love, and change.

I would like to, again, thank my amazing colleagues, Congresswoman VAL DEMINGS and Congresswoman STEPHANIE MURPHY, for joining me in leading this important legislation, and I urge a “yes” vote.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 49, offered by my colleague from Florida (Mr. SOTO).

Nearly 5 years ago, on June 12, 2016, a senseless and horrific mass shooting was perpetrated by an ISIS-inspired coward at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. In the attack, 49 innocent people were killed and 53 were wounded.

This bill, and the number H.R. 49, is a thoughtful tribute to the 49 individuals killed in the attack. In the aftermath of the unspeakable tragedy at Pulse, the owner of the club established a nonprofit called the onePULSE Foundation to memorialize those who died in the mass murder, known as the 49.

The foundation worked quickly to establish an interim memorial in Orlando and has been working to build a permanent Pulse memorial and museum, which will be completed in coming years.

This bill would redesignate the Pulse Memorial in Orlando, Florida, as the “National Pulse Memorial.” The bill makes clear that this memorial will not be a unit of the National Park System and that designation as a national memorial does not require any Federal funds to be expended.

The House’s action on this bill today complements the United States Senate resolution passed on June 11, 2020, honoring the victims of this tragedy, as well as the State of Florida’s designation of June 12 as Pulse Remembrance Day.

Madam Speaker, I urge adoption of the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SOTO. Madam Speaker, I thank the ranking member, Mr. WESTERMAN from Arkansas, for his bipartisan support.

Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. DEMINGS).

Mrs. DEMINGS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join us in supporting H.R. 49 to finally designate the Pulse nightclub as a national memorial in honor and remembrance of the 49 people who lost their lives on this tragic night 5 years ago.

“Orlando Strong” is more than just a slogan. It is a promise to support each other and to never forget those we lost and those who were injured on that tragic night. By establishing Pulse as a national memorial, we will honor their memories and remind ourselves of that promise.

My bishop once called the Pulse nightclub a place for late-night fellowship, a place for fun, laughter, family, and friendship. These are such fundamental things. We know this now more than ever. After the pandemic, we see just how precious these things truly are.

Madam Speaker, I thank the House for moving forward with this legislation. I thank my constituents. I thank the cosponsors, Congresswoman MURPHY and Congressman SOTO, for their work to make this day a reality.