

Here is a tip: Be honest with the American people about the price tag of your agenda and the higher prices that will be inflicted. Then a hearing on the state of our Nation's fiscal health will be much more successful.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I would just say to the gentleman I would hate to hear what he would say if he actually opposed the bill. But the bottom line is the bills that we are trying to move through this Chamber right now that would be transformational are fully paid for. I just can't be lectured by anybody who advocated for a tax cut bill that benefited mostly the wealthy and well-off in this country that was not paid for at all and that added \$2 trillion right to our debt. So spare me the lectures.

I reserve the balance of my time, Madam Speaker.

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WOMACK) in order to continue the lectures, and who is a valuable member of the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. WOMACK. Madam Speaker, my thanks to my colleague from Texas for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important subject.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution, though I have to admit that it is easy to be somewhat pessimistic about its potential effectiveness. But I am willing to try anything—anything—that might work in elevating the Nation's debt situation in the minds of the people we all represent.

The people I represent in Arkansas don't have a choice but to balance their checkbooks, and if they can't, then they are limited in how much they can borrow and for what. Sadly, the Federal Government doesn't play by the same rules.

Madam Speaker, we are \$29 trillion in debt. We have budget deficits as far as the eyes can see. We are mortgaging the futures of our kids and our grandkids. And it is painfully obvious to me that the governing majority doesn't really care much about deficits and debt. But Third District Arkansans do.

I had the honor of co-chairing a joint select committee in 2018 that tried to address the budget and appropriations process that has tripped up the Congress every year since I have been here, and to think that we are only funded through the third day of December, with no assurance of a full year's appropriation by then, something has to be done.

A fiscal state of the Union is one of the recommendations that came from our joint select committee, but I will remind everyone that we need three more—count them, three more—Democrat votes to move those recommendations. And four, Madam Speaker, four Democrats voted “present.”

So forgive me if I don't sound terribly optimistic that Congress will get its act together. But maybe, just

maybe, something like this will force a rational discussion before we have what is coming: a sovereign debt crisis.

So, I am willing to try, and I encourage my colleagues to support it.

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

Madam Speaker, I would just remind the gentleman this is a bipartisan bill put forward by a bipartisan commission, and I am glad to hear him talking about the debt. I wish some of my colleagues would have talked about it when they controlled the House and the White House, but the debt that we are talking about was accumulated by Republican Presidents and Republican Congresses and Democratic Presidents and Democratic Congresses.

President Biden has only been in office 9 months, and the spending that he is proposing is to be fully paid for, with a recognition that we do not want to see an increase in our deficits and our debt.

But this is a bipartisan moment, and we should celebrate it. But maybe I am sounding a little eccentric when I say that.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

So, Madam Speaker, in closing, this legislation will provide the congressional Budget Committees with an unbiased, analytical understanding of the audited financial statement of the Federal Government.

We know problems remain in completing this audit, as the Department of Defense has yet to receive a full financial audit opinion. To ensure that this statutorily required audit is achieved and to gain a comprehensive understanding of the financial health of the Federal Government, we certainly must pass the Fiscal State of the Nation Resolution.

Madam Speaker, I urge support of the resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Madam Speaker, this is a bipartisan resolution. It was presented to us by a bipartisan select committee. I think we should all appreciate this particular moment.

It is about making sure that Congress is provided a presentation of the facts about our Nation's fiscal health as we make decisions that will impact America's bottom line. Democrats and Republicans could then fight it out over the next steps. We have different priorities and different values on a lot of things.

□ 1300

But there should be no disagreement about this resolution right now. And, surely, even in this day and age, we can all still agree on the need to get the facts in the light of day for us and the people who we represent.

Again, I want to thank Congresswoman RICE from New York for her

leadership on this issue, and I want to thank my colleague on the Rules Committee Congressman BURGESS for cosponsoring this legislation. There should be no controversy over this.

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

Miss RICE of New York. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of my legislation, H. Con. Res. 44, the Fiscal State of the Nation resolution.

This resolution would require the Comptroller General of the United States to present an annual report on the fiscal health of the federal government to a joint hearing of the House and Senate Budget Committees, open to ALL members of Congress.

This nonpartisan presentation will offer an objective analysis of the nation's finances and allow Congress to demonstrate to the public that we are serious about improving our fiscal decision-making.

As we finalize historic investments to rebuild our infrastructure and help families and small businesses recover from this pandemic, it is more important than ever that we act as responsible stewards of the American people's tax dollars.

Every lawmaker, citizen, and media outlet should be able to reference a single, unbiased source when discussing the current and future fiscal health of our country. And the Fiscal State of the Nation would provide that valuable information with transparency and accuracy.

I'm incredibly proud this bipartisan resolution has garnered over 100 cosponsors, almost evenly split between Democratic and Republican members.

I'd like to thank my friend, Representative ANDY BARR from Kentucky, for co-leading this legislation with me, and I urge its swift passage on the Floor today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 44, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HAZARD ELIGIBILITY AND LOCAL PROJECTS ACT

Mr. PAPPAS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1917) to modify eligibility requirements for certain hazard mitigation assistance programs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1917

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 “Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects Act”.

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY TO BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION OF ACQUISITION OR RELOCATION PROJECTS.

(a) ELIGIBILITY FOR ASSISTANCE FOR INITIATED PROJECTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an entity seeking assistance under a hazard mitigation assistance program shall be eligible to receive such assistance for a covered project if the entity—

(A) complies with all other eligibility requirements of the hazard mitigation assistance program for acquisition or relocation projects, including extinguishing all incompatible encumbrances; and

(B) complies with all Federal requirements for the project.

(2) COSTS INCURRED.—An entity seeking assistance under a hazard mitigation assistance program shall be responsible for any project costs incurred by the entity for a covered project if the covered project is not awarded, or is determined to be ineligible for, assistance.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) COVERED PROJECT.—The term “covered project” means—

(A) an acquisition or relocation project for which an entity began implementation prior to grant award under a hazard mitigation assistance program; and

(B) a project for which an entity initiated planning or construction before or after requesting assistance for the project under a hazard mitigation assistance program qualifying for a categorical exemption under the National Environmental Policy Act.

(2) HAZARD MITIGATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.—The term “hazard mitigation assistance program” means—

(A) the predisaster hazard mitigation grant program authorized under section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5133);

(B) the hazard mitigation grant program authorized under section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170c); and

(C) the flood mitigation assistance program authorized under section 1366 of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4104c).

(c) APPLICABILITY.—This section shall apply to funds appropriated on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. PAPPAS) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. GUEST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Hampshire.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PAPPAS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on H.R. 1917.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1917, introduced and championed by Representative FLETCHER. The Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects, or HELP Act, is designed to cut through red tape to unlock Federal assistance to State and local governments to complete some of the most basic mitigation projects more efficiently, such as buyouts of flood-prone properties. It

represents a change to the current law's one-size-fits-all approach to reviewing projects that frequently delays mitigation work which will be welcome news to communities across my State in New Hampshire, and across our country as we deal with more frequent severe weather events that may require a Federal response.

The National Institute of Building Sciences has conducted significant analysis on the return on investment to taxpayers for investments in mitigation. Congress, under both Democratic and Republican majorities, has seen fit to bolster investments in mitigation to drive down future disaster response and recovery costs.

Just last week, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee marked up the Resilient AMERICA Act which would align the calculation used to fund the Federal Emergency Management Agency's pre-disaster mitigation program with the agency's post-disaster mitigation program.

FEMA's longest-running mitigation program, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, or HMGP, began in 1989 and provides assistance after a disaster has struck. While there have been more than \$5.2 billion obligated to HMGP projects, more than \$1 billion in HMGP dollars have gone unobligated and will return to FEMA.

This bill will help disaster-impacted communities complete the land acquisition and simple construction projects that would otherwise be categorically exempt from a NEPA review, streamlining the process with FEMA. I want to commend Congresswoman FLETCHER for her efforts to help disaster-vulnerable communities quicken the pace of recoveries and mitigate against future events.

I support this bill and urge my colleagues to do the same. I reserve the balance of my time.

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE, HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, November 1, 2021.

Hon. MAXINE WATERS,
Chairwoman, Committee on Financial Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRWOMAN WATERS: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1917, the Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects Act. I appreciate your willingness to work cooperatively on this legislation.

I acknowledge that by foregoing formal consideration on H.R. 1917, the Committee on Financial Services does not waive any future jurisdictional claims to provisions in this or similar legislation, and that your Committee will be consulted and involved on any matters in your Committee's jurisdiction should this legislation move forward. In addition, should a conference on the bill be necessary, I would support your effort to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving provisions within this legislation on which the Committee on Financial Services has a valid jurisdictional claim.

I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation, and I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the CON-

GRESSIONAL RECORD during floor consideration of H.R. 1917.

Sincerely,

PETER A. DEFazio,
Chair.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, DC, November 1, 2021.

Hon. PETER DEFazio,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing concerning H.R. 1917, the “Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects Act.” In order to permit H.R. 1917 to proceed expeditiously to the House Floor, I agree to forgo formal consideration of the bill.

The Committee on Financial Services takes this action to forego formal consideration of H.R. 1917 in light of our mutual understanding that, by foregoing formal consideration of H.R. 1917 at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained in this or similar legislation, and that our Committee will be appropriately consulted and involved as this or similar legislation moves forward with regard to any matters in the Committee's jurisdiction. The Committee also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees to any House-Senate conference involving this or similar legislation that involves the Committee's jurisdiction and request your support for any such request.

Finally, I would appreciate your response to this letter confirming this understanding, and I would ask that a copy of our exchange of letters on this matter be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during Floor consideration of H.R. 1917.

Sincerely,

MAXINE WATERS,
Chairwoman.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1917, the Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects Act.

This bipartisan legislation will let communities recover from disasters more efficiently, and even more importantly, better prepare these communities for the next disaster.

H.R. 1917 provides assistance for certain mitigation projects that began before the grant was applied for. Last Congress, the House also worked in a bipartisan manner to pass this very practical bill under suspension of the rules. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PAPPAS. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas (Mrs. FLETCHER).

Mrs. FLETCHER. Madam Speaker, I am delighted to bring my bill, H.R. 1917, the Hazard Eligibility and Local Projects, or HELP Act, to the floor today, and I thank Congressman PAPPAS, and I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for agreeing to move this bill forward. I am so proud of the HELP Act and all that it represents. It is bipartisan, commonsense, meaningful legislation, that was born out of a real partnership with local officials in my district in

Houston that will benefit all Americans.

As many in this body will recall, Hurricane Harvey hit my district in Houston and the entire Texas Gulf Coast in August of 2017, causing great devastation, dropping nearly 60 inches of rain, claiming 68 lives, and causing an estimated \$125 billion in damages. It was the second-most expensive hurricane in the United States' history. Members of this body responded to Harvey's devastation with the speed and purpose we needed for our recovery, passing three supplemental appropriations bills, sending billions of dollars in aid to Texas through different programs. But our recovery was and still is slow, slower than many expected, and slower than any can afford.

Before I was sworn into Congress, I met with our local officials at home to talk about the impediments to our recovery. How could we speed it up? Where was recovery delayed? What could the Federal Government do? And one impediment that had significant impact on our recovery was the process for the award of mitigation project funding from FEMA.

Here is why. As Mr. PAPPAS noted, section 404 of the Stafford Act provides that FEMA may grant up to 75 percent of funds for cost-effective mitigation projects through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, HMGP. When States or municipalities apply through the HMGP program, projects, regardless of size or scope, require a comprehensive review to make sure all requirements of NEPA or other statutory requirements are met.

Importantly, these hazard mitigation grants do not allow for the reimbursement of costs incurred before a grant is approved. As a result, many areas recovering from disaster must wait for the FEMA review before purchasing land or starting construction on a project designed to mitigate damage. This FEMA review can go on for months or years at a critical time for decisionmaking and recovering.

In the case of natural disasters, local governments need to move quickly on projects like land acquisition; for example, buying land or buying out homes that have been damaged or other land acquisition projects. In Houston, this was true for us when we were looking to buy a golf course to create additional stormwater detention. The chief recovery officer for the city of Houston has told us that FEMA's pre-award cost policy—that is, not allowing reimbursement of costs incurred before grant approval—is a limiting factor in recovery, especially in cases of land acquisition.

Homeowners simply cannot afford to wait the months or years to make decisions about whether to repair their homes or participate in a buyout. The result is not only inefficiency, but real hardship.

For example, Harris County Flood Control District received \$25 million from the Hazard Mitigation Grant Pro-

gram to conduct buyouts to reduce flood damages in areas located deep in the floodplain where structural projects to reduce flooding aren't cost-effective. But that was nearly a year after Harvey. It took a year because of the review period required at FEMA for all HMGP applications. Most homeowners simply don't have the luxury of waiting a year or more to begin repairs or decide what to do.

So the quicker local governments are able to move, the more people they can help and the more resources they can leverage. Having a one-size-fits-all approach to reviewing projects through the HMGP is not efficient or effective. It needlessly delays critical mitigation work.

That is where the idea for the HELP Act came from. The HELP Act will allow land acquisition projects and simple construction projects that do not require an environmental impact statement under NEPA to commence immediately without the risk of losing potential Federal funds. This will allow State and local governments to respond more quickly to the needs of their communities and to plan disaster mitigation more efficiently and effectively by removing unnecessary delays and streamlining FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. It is simple, it is straightforward, and it is needed.

At home, I continue to hear a consistent concern that these Federal disaster recovery projects move at a very slow pace. This bill addresses that and will be a real improvement for communities across the country.

I would like to thank my colleague, Mr. McCAUL, for working with me on this bill. Disaster mitigation is not and should never be a partisan issue. There remains much work to do to prepare for future storms that we know will come, but I am hopeful that the HELP Act will aid State and local governments when they do.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation and help our families, businesses, and communities recover from disasters.

Mr. GUEST. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time as I have no additional speakers.

In closing, H.R. 1917 benefits our communities by allowing them to be eligible for Federal disaster mitigation assistance for projects started prior to their request for assistance. I believe that this bill is a good bill, and I urge support of this bipartisan legislation. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PAPPAS. Madam Speaker, I want to thank Congresswoman FLETCHER again for her leadership on this issue. I urge my colleagues to pass this commonsense 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 New Hampshire (Mr. PAPPAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1917.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. ROSENDALE. 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.

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ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP ACT

Mr. PAPPAS. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1339) to require the Secretary of Transportation to establish an advanced air mobility interagency working group, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1339

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 "Advanced Air Mobility Coordination and Leadership Act".

SEC. 2. ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY WORKING GROUP.

(a) **WORKING GROUP.**—Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall establish an advanced air mobility interagency working group (in this section referred to as the "working group").

(b) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of the working group established under subsection (a) shall be to plan and coordinate efforts related to the safety, operations, infrastructure, physical security, cybersecurity, and Federal investment necessary for maturation of the AAM ecosystem in the United States. It is critical that Government agencies collaborate in order to enhance United States leadership, develop new transportation options, amplify economic activity and jobs, advance environmental sustainability and new technologies, and support emergency preparedness and competitiveness.

(c) **MEMBERSHIP.**—Not later than 60 days after the establishment of the working group under subsection (a), the Secretary of Transportation shall—

(1) appoint the Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy to chair the working group;

(2) designate not less than one additional representative to participate on the working group from each of—

(A) the Department of Transportation; and
(B) the Federal Aviation Administration; and
(3) invite the heads of each of the following departments or agencies to designate not less than 1 representative to participate on the working group, including—

(A) the National Aeronautics and Space Administration;
(B) the Department of Defense;
(C) the Department of Energy;
(D) the Department of Homeland Security;
(E) the Department of Commerce;
(F) the Federal Communications Commission;

and
(G) such other departments or agencies as the Secretary of Transportation determines appropriate.

(d) COORDINATION.—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Transportation and Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall coordinate with aviation industry and labor stakeholders, stakeholder associations, and others determined appropriate by the Secretary of Transportation