

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia? There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1066, the Wildfire Recovery Act, a bill introduced by Mr. NEGUSE from Colorado. This legislation will remove some of the financial burdens communities face after suppressing a wildfire.

Wildfires are causing an unprecedented amount of damage to the natural and built environment. This bill will require the Federal Emergency Management Agency to cover at least 75 percent of the costs to suppress wildfires that qualify for a Fire Management Assistance Grant. Local officials have said that this fix would allow them to speed up the recovery process and invest more money in mitigation efforts.

Rural communities that typically receive this type of grant assistance will benefit most from this legislation. Providing more Federal assistance in the wake of the worst fires will assist stretched local budgets.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Wildfire Recovery Act ensures that communities affected by wildfire disasters are treated similarly as communities affected by other disasters.

The bill provides parity by making a Federal cost share amount adjustable for Fire Management Assistance Grants, ensuring it is consistent with other FEMA assistance programs at 75 percent.

H.R. 1066 also clarifies the ability for Fire Management Assistance Grants to help communities recover after wildfire disasters and rebuild their infrastructure.

I thank my colleagues, including Mr. LAMALFA of California, who is a cosponsor, for their leadership on this legislation. I urge support of this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

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

In closing, I urge support of this legislation, thank our colleagues for cosponsoring, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1066, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

□ 1530

CIVILIAN RESERVIST EMERGENCY WORKFORCE ACT OF 2021

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 2293) to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to provide certain employment rights to reservists of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2293

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 “Civilian Reservist Emergency Workforce Act of 2021” or the “CREW Act”.

SEC. 2. PERSONNEL PERFORMING SERVICE RESPONDING TO PRESIDENTIALLY DECLARED MAJOR DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES.

Section 306 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5149) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) PERSONNEL PERFORMING SERVICE RESPONDING TO DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES.—

“(1) USERRA EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS.—The protections, rights, benefits, and obligations provided under chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code, shall apply to intermittent personnel appointed pursuant to subsection (b)(1) to perform service to the Federal Emergency Management Agency under sections 401 and 501 or to train for such service.

“(2) NOTICE OF ABSENCE FROM POSITION OF EMPLOYMENT.—Preclusion of giving notice of service by necessity of service under subsection (b)(1) to perform service to the Federal Emergency Management Agency under sections 401 and 501 or to train for such service shall be considered preclusion by ‘military necessity’ for purposes of section 4312(b) of title 38, United States Code, pertaining to giving notice of absence from a position of employment. A determination of such necessity shall be made by the Administrator and shall not be subject to review in any judicial or administrative proceeding.”.

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF CERTAIN EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS TO FEMA RESERVISTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4303 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (13), by inserting before “, and a period” the following: “, a period for which a person is absent from a position of employment due to an appointment into service in the Federal Emergency Management Agency as intermittent personnel under section 306(b)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5149(b)(1))”;

(2) by redesignating the second paragraph (16) (relating to uniformed services) as paragraph (17); and

(3) in paragraph (17), as so redesignated, by inserting before “and any other category” the following: “intermittent personnel who

are appointed into Federal Emergency Management Agency service under section 306(b)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5149(b)(1)) or to train for such service.”.

(b) MODIFICATION OF EXCEPTION FOR REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES TO PROVIDE NOTICE TO EMPLOYERS TO OBTAIN CERTAIN EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS.—Section 4312(b) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking the second sentence;

(2) by inserting “(1)” before “No notice”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(2) A determination of military necessity for purposes of paragraph (1) shall be made—

“(A) except as provided in subparagraphs (B) and (C), pursuant to regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Defense;

“(B) for persons performing service to the Federal Emergency Management Agency under section 327 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5165f) and as intermittent personnel under section 306(b)(1) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5149(b)(1)), by the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency as described in sections 327(j)(2) and 306(d)(2) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 5165f(j)(2) and 5149(d)(2)), respectively; or

“(C) for intermittent disaster-response appointees of the National Disaster Medical System, by the Secretary of Health and Human Services as described in section 2812(d)(3)(B) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300hh–11(d)(3)(B)).

“(3) A determination of military necessity under paragraph (1) shall not be subject to judicial review.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. CRAWFORD) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Mr. 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 S. 2293.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia? There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2293, the Civilian Reservist Emergency Workforce Act of 2021, which extends Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act protections to the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s reservist workforce.

Reservists assist disaster survivors and first responders on an on-call basis. They are prepared to deploy when disaster strikes and make up the majority of FEMA’s workforce. While reservists are critical to Federal disaster response, these essential personnel are only paid by FEMA during deployments and have no protections that prevent them from losing their full-time jobs when called to a disaster.

FEMA’s workforce has been stretched to its limits by increasingly

frequent and intense disasters, climate change, and the coronavirus pandemic. A larger reservist workforce is required to meet the current challenge, but FEMA has reported that it is difficult to retain reservists and recruit a diverse workforce without being able to offer them basic protections. FEMA Administrator Deanna Criswell has stated that the ability to recruit and maintain a skilled reservist workforce is necessary if the agency is to fulfill its mission of helping people before, during, and after disasters.

This bill will help FEMA continue to fulfill that mission and ensure that these brave women and men do not have to worry that they could lose their livelihoods when they are called by their country to serve.

It is time we give reservists the respect they deserve and provide them protections. I would like to express my gratitude to reservists who have answered the call and to those who will do so in the future.

I ask my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, S. 2293, the CREW Act, extends protections under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, commonly referred to as USERRA, to FEMA reservists.

FEMA reservists are a critical component to supporting disaster survivors and our first responders.

The CREW Act would provide FEMA further tools to retain and recruit a workforce. By having a strong workforce, FEMA is then able to respond quickly and effectively to disasters, thereby fulfilling its mission to disaster victims.

I urge support of this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. TITUS).

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise in support of S. 2293, the Civilian Reservist Emergency Workforce, or CREW, Act, appropriately named, which is the Senate companion to legislation I introduced to protect FEMA reservists. It would protect them from losing their full-time employment when they are called up to assist our communities during and after disasters.

FEMA reservists have in the past and continue to step up time and time again when communities need help in the wake of severe storms, wildfires, and other climate events. We also saw them on the front lines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unlike military reservists, however, FEMA's workforce is not afforded employment protections during deployment. When these men and women are answering the call of duty, they shouldn't have to worry about losing their means of income back home

where they can take care of their own families.

I am proud to lead the House companion to this bill along with my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO). I thank him for his leadership, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to close.

Mr. Speaker, S. 2293 will help support FEMA's intermittent workforce and enable the agency to better meet its mission to respond to disasters.

Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this legislation and yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 2293, the "Civilian Reservist Emergency Workforce Act of 2021" or "CREW Act."

This bill would amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to provide certain employment rights to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reservists.

FEMA reservists are temporary, on-call, and intermittent employees who are crucial to the agency's mission to swiftly respond to disasters—but, they currently do not have employment protections.

The bill makes employment protections under the Uniformed Services and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) applicable to FEMA reservists who deploy to major disaster and emergency sites.

It allows reservists to claim such rights under USERRA even if they do not provide notice of their absence from work due to deployment.

The bill ensures that reservists will be able to return to their full-time jobs once their disaster response mission is complete.

These FEMA workers were essential during the Texas Freeze of 2021, the historic natural disaster Hurricane Harvey, and the initial outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic.

We need to protect intermittent FEMA employees' rights to return to their full-time jobs after performing life-changing and life-saving work in our communities.

Currently, FEMA faces a large shortfall of reservists because it is difficult to recruit and retain Americans who can balance reservist duties and full-time employment.

With this bill's protections for employees, FEMA's ability to recruit and retain employees would be enhanced. With more FEMA employees, we can combat disasters and crises quicker.

Our Nation must never again be so ill-prepared to weather a disaster like Hurricane Harvey or a crisis like COVID-19.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2293.

The question was taken.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

PLANNING FOR ANIMAL WELLNESS ACT

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 4205) to require the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to establish a working group relating to best practices and Federal guidance for animals in emergencies and disasters, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 4205

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 "Planning for Animal Wellness Act" or the "PAW Act".

SEC. 2. WORKING GROUP GUIDELINES.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term "Administrator" means the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

(2) WORKING GROUP.—The term "working group" means the advisory working group established under subsection (b).

(b) WORKING GROUP.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall establish an advisory working group.

(c) MEMBERSHIP.—The working group shall consist of—

(1) not less than 2 representatives of State governments with experience in animal emergency management;

(2) not less than 2 representatives of local governments with experience in animal emergency management;

(3) not less than 2 representatives from academia;

(4) not less than 2 veterinary experts;

(5) not less than 2 representatives from nonprofit organizations working to address the needs of households pets and service animals in emergencies or disasters;

(6) representatives from the Federal Animal Emergency Management Working Group; and

(7) any other members determined necessary by the Administrator.

(d) DUTIES.—The working group shall—

(1) encourage and foster collaborative efforts among individuals and entities working to address the needs of household pets, service and assistance animals, and captive animals, as appropriate, in emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery; and

(2) review best practices and Federal guidance, as of the date of enactment of this Act, on congregate and noncongregate sheltering and evacuation planning relating to the needs of household pets, service and assistance animals, and captive animals, as appropriate, in emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

(e) NO COMPENSATION.—The members of the working group shall serve on the working group on a voluntary basis.

(f) GUIDANCE DETERMINATION.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the working group shall determine whether the best practices and Federal guidance described in subsection (d)(2) are sufficient.