

will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

EMPOWERING THE U.S. FIRE ADMINISTRATION ACT

Mr. BEYER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 7077) to require the United States Fire Administration to conduct on-site investigations of major fires, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Empowering the U.S. Fire Administration Act”.

SEC. 2. FIRE SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS.

The Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2201 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 38. INVESTIGATION AUTHORITIES.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a major fire, the Administrator may send incident investigators, which may include safety specialists, fire protection engineers, codes and standards experts, researchers, and fire training specialists, to the site of the fire to conduct a fire safety investigation as described in subsection (b).

“(b) INVESTIGATION REQUIRED.—A fire safety investigation conducted under this section—

“(1) shall be conducted in coordination and cooperation with appropriate Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial authorities, including Federal agencies that are authorized to investigate any fire; and

“(2) shall examine the previously determined cause and origin of the fire and assess broader systematic matters to include use of codes and standards, demographics, structural characteristics, smoke and fire dynamics (movement) during the event, and costs of associated injuries and deaths.

“(c) REPORT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to paragraph (2), upon concluding any fire safety investigation under this section, the Administrator shall—

“(A) issue a public report to the appropriate Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial authorities on the findings of such investigation; or

“(B) collaborate with another investigating Federal, State, local, Tribal, or territorial agency on the report of that agency.

“(2) EXCEPTION.—If the Administrator, in consultation with appropriate Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial authorities determines that issuing a report under paragraph (1) would have a negative impact on a potential or ongoing criminal investigation, the Administrator is not required to issue such report.

“(3) CONTENTS.—Each public report issued under paragraph (1) shall include recommendations on—

“(A) any other buildings with similar characteristics that may bear similar fire risks;

“(B) improving tactical response to similar fires;

“(C) improving civilian safety practices;

“(D) assessing the costs and benefits to the community of adding fire safety features; and

“(E) how to mitigate the causes of the fire.

“(d) DISCRETIONARY AUTHORITY.—In addition to a fire safety investigation conducted pursu-

ant to subsection (a), provided doing so would not have a negative impact on a potential or ongoing criminal investigation, the Administrator may send fire investigators to conduct a fire safety investigation at the site of any fire with unusual or remarkable context that results in losses less severe than those occurring as a result of a major fire, in coordination and cooperation with the appropriate Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial authorities, including Federal agencies that are authorized to investigate the fire.

“(e) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to—

“(1) affect or otherwise diminish the authorities or the mandates vested in other Federal agencies;

“(2) grant the Administrator authority to investigate a major fire for the purpose of an enforcement action or criminal prosecution; or

“(3) require the Administrator to send investigators or issue a report for a major fire when the Administrator, in coordination and cooperation with the appropriate Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial authorities, determine that it may compromise a potential or ongoing criminal investigation.

“(f) MAJOR FIRE DEFINED.—For purposes of this section, the term ‘major fire’ shall have the meaning given such term under regulations to be issued by the Administrator.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER) and the gentlewoman from Oklahoma (Mrs. BICE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BEYER. 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 H.R. 7077, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 7077, the Empowering the U.S. Fire Administration Act.

Although significant progress has been made in preventing major fires over the past 25 years, building fires in the United States remain a serious problem.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, there was an estimated 372,000 residential building fires within the United States in 2020. These fires caused an estimated 2,615 deaths, 11,825 injuries, and \$8.6 billion in property loss.

It is very timely that we are about to enact this bill as winter approaches and residential building fires are more likely to occur.

It is essential that we learn from major fires to inform and improve future fire prevention efforts. The U.S. Fire Administration is an essential part of these efforts.

Unfortunately, the agency currently lacks the authority to participate in post-fire onsite investigations.

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H.R. 7077 addresses this gap by authorizing USFA to send their own ex-

perts to the site of a major fire to conduct an onsite investigation in coordination and cooperation with Federal, State, local, Tribal, and Territorial authorities. In doing so, this bill more fully leverages the unique expertise of the U.S. Fire Administration to help strengthen fire prevention.

This bill would also require the administrator to issue a public report on the findings of an investigation or collaborate with another investigating agency on their report. This report would include recommendations on improving tactical response and civilian safety practices, as well as on approaches to mitigation. These reports are an essential component of ensuring that everyone can utilize the knowledge we collect from major fires to improve future prevention efforts.

I thank my friend and colleague, Representative RITCHIE TORRES, for his leadership on this bill. Representative TORRES introduced this bill after a major residential building fire in his district on January 9 of this year resulted in the tragic deaths of 17 people, including 8 children.

I also thank my colleagues on the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, Representatives HALEY STEVENS, ANTHONY GONZALEZ, and PETER MEIJER for their leadership on this bill, and I urge all of my colleagues to join us in passing this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BICE of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 7077, the Empowering the U.S. Fire Administration Act. This bipartisan legislation would give the U.S. Fire Administration the authority to send specialists to assist local firefighter investigators in onsite investigations of major fires.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, last year had the highest number of home fire deaths in 14 years. As was mentioned, families in Representative TORRES' district know the devastation of major fires after suffering through New York City's deadliest fire in over three decades. This single fire claimed the lives of 17 residents, including 8 children.

By empowering the U.S. Fire Administration to partner with local fire departments, we can better determine the root cause of these tragedies and make sure that they never happen again.

The U.S. Fire Administration is housed within FEMA, and it has valuable and lifesaving resources on preventing, responding to, and investigating fires. This bill would ensure that State and local governments can access their expertise and, hopefully, prevent major fires in the future.

The bill directs incident investigators to examine the determined cause and origins of fires. It also requires them to assess broader systematic matters including use of codes and

standards, demographics, structural characteristics, smoke and fire dynamics, costs, and associated injuries and deaths.

Additionally, the bill also requires the U.S. Fire Administration to issue a report in coordination with Federal, State, and local authorities on their findings, and to provide recommendations to Federal, State, and local officials to implement to prevent similar fires from occurring in the future.

This bill passed the House with overwhelming bipartisan support in May of this year. The Senate amendment added language to ensure that the U.S. Fire Administration would not affect or diminish the authorities of other Federal agencies when investigating major fires and would not grant the administrator authority to investigate a major fire for the purpose of an enforcement action or criminal prosecution.

This bill incorporates stakeholder and agency feedback and is endorsed by the Fire Department of New York, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, the National Association of State Fire Marshals, and the National Fire Protection Association.

I thank Representative TORRES for introducing and leading the original bill, as well as the original cosponsors from our committee: Representatives STEVENS, MEIJER, and GONZALEZ. I also thank Senator PETERS for his work on the Senate amendment.

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

Mr. BEYERS. Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers at this time, I am ready to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BICE of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, I rise again in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 7077, the Empowering the U.S. Fire Administration Act.

As I previously mentioned, the U.S. Fire Administration has valuable and lifesaving resources in preventing, responding to, and investigating fires. This amendment would ensure that State and local governments have access to these resources and that the U.S. Fire Administration has the authority needed to conduct onsite investigations of major fires without diminishing the authorities of other Federal agencies or negatively affecting ongoing or potential criminal investigations.

We cannot afford to let any more tragic and preventable fires like the one in Representative TORRES' district happen in the future.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BEYERS. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative BICE for joining me in presenting this bill today. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 7077, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BEYER) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 7077.

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. ROSENDALE. Madam 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.

FLOOD LEVEL OBSERVATION, OPERATIONS, AND DECISION SUPPORT ACT

Mr. BEYER. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 558) to establish a national integrated flood information system within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 558

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Flood Level Observation, Operations, and Decision Support Act” or the “FLOODS Act”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Definitions.
- Sec. 3. National Integrated Flood Information System.
- Sec. 4. Observations and modeling for total water prediction.
- Sec. 5. Service coordination hydrologists at River Forecast Centers of the National Weather Service.
- Sec. 6. Improving National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration communication of future flood risks and hazardous flash flood events.
- Sec. 7. Freshwater monitoring along the coast.
- Sec. 8. Tornado warning improvement.
- Sec. 9. Hurricane forecast improvement program.
- Sec. 10. Weather and water research and development planning.
- Sec. 11. Forecast communication coordinators.
- Sec. 12. Estimates of precipitation frequency in the United States.
- Sec. 13. Interagency Committee on Water Management and Infrastructure.
- Sec. 14. National Weather Service hydrologic research fellowship program.
- Sec. 15. Identification and support of consistent, Federal set of forward-looking, long-term meteorological information.
- Sec. 16. Gap analysis on availability of snow-related data to assess and predict flood and flood impacts.
- Sec. 17. Availability to the public of flood-related data.

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(2) STATE.—The term “State” means each State of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and any other territory or possession of the United States.

SEC. 3. NATIONAL INTEGRATED FLOOD INFORMATION SYSTEM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish a system, to be known as the “National Integrated Flood Information System”, to better inform and provide for more timely decision making to reduce flood-related effects and costs.

(b) SYSTEM FUNCTIONS.—The Administrator, through the National Integrated Flood Information System, shall—

(1) provide an effective flood early warning system that—

(A) collects and integrates information on the key indicators of floods and flood impacts, including streamflow, reservoir release and diversion, precipitation, soil moisture, snow water equivalent, land cover, and evaporative demand;

(B) makes usable, reliable, and timely forecasts of floods;

(C) assesses the severity of flood conditions and effects;

(D) provides information described in subparagraph (A), forecasts described in subparagraph (B), and assessments described in subparagraph (C) at the national, regional, and local levels, as appropriate; and

(E) communicates flood forecasts, flood conditions, and flood impacts to appropriate entities engaged in flood planning, preparedness, and response and post-event flood extent, including—

(i) decision makers at the Federal, State, local, and Tribal levels of government; and

(ii) the public;

(2) provide timely data, information, and products that reflect differences in flood conditions among localities, regions, watersheds, and States;

(3) coordinate and integrate, through interagency agreements as practicable, Federal research and monitoring in support of the flood early warning information system provided under paragraph (1);

(4) use existing forecasting and assessment programs and partnerships;

(5) make improvements in seasonal precipitation and temperature, subseasonal precipitation and temperature, and flood water prediction; and

(6) continue ongoing research and monitoring activities relating to floods, including research activities relating to—

(A) the prediction, length, severity, and impacts of floods and improvement of the accuracy, timing, and specificity of flash flood warnings;

(B) the role of extreme weather events and climate variability in floods; and

(C) how water travels over and through surfaces.

(c) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Administrator, through the National Integrated Flood Information System, may—

(1) engage with the private sector to improve flood monitoring, forecasts, land and topography data, and communication, if the Administrator determines that such engagement is appropriate, cost effective, and beneficial to the public and decision makers described in subsection (b)(1)(E)(i);

(2) facilitate the development of 1 or more academic cooperative partnerships to assist in carrying out the functions of the National