

imposed policies denying Baha'is and members of other religious minorities equal opportunities to higher education, earning a livelihood, due process under the law, and the free exercise of religious practices.

Calls on the President of the United States and the Secretary of State, in cooperation with responsible nations, to immediately condemn the Government of Iran's continued violation of human rights, and demand the immediate release of prisoners held solely on account of their religion; and urges the President and the Secretary of State to utilize available authorities to impose sanctions on officials of the Government of Iran and other individuals directly responsible for serious human rights abuses, including abuses against the Baha'i community of Iran.

H. Res. 492, is an important bill supporting Congress' longstanding position condemning such atrocities against religious minorities.

I, therefore, urge all members to support this important legislation and reenforce this longstanding objection and condemnation to these horrific atrocities and inhumanity.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. McCAUL) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 492.

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. McCAUL. 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.

ACCURATELY COUNTING RISK ELIMINATION SOLUTIONS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1567) to require that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activities, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1567

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 "Accurately Counting Risk Elimination Solutions Act" or the "ACRES Act".

SEC. 2. ACCURATE HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION REPORTS.

(a) INCLUSION OF HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION REPORT IN MATERIALS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning with the first fiscal year that begins after the date of the enactment of this Act, and each fiscal year thereafter, the Secretary concerned shall include in the materials submitted in support of the President's budget pursuant to section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, a report on the number of acres of Federal land on which the Secretary concerned carried out hazardous fuels reduction activities during the preceding fiscal year.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—For purposes of the report required under paragraph (1), the Secretary concerned shall—

(A) in determining the number of acres of Federal land on which the Secretary concerned carried out hazardous fuels reduction activities during the period covered by the report—

(i) record acres of Federal land on which hazardous fuels reduction activities were completed during such period; and

(ii) record each acre described in clause (i) once in the report, regardless of whether multiple hazardous fuels reduction activities were carried out on such acre during such period; and

(B) with respect to the acres of Federal land recorded in the report, include information on—

(i) which such acres are located in the wildland-urban interface;

(ii) the level of wildfire risk (high, moderate, or low) on the first and last day of the period covered by the report;

(iii) the types of hazardous fuels activities completed for such acres, delineating between whether such activities were conducted—

(I) in a wildfire managed for resource benefits; or

(II) through a planned project;

(iv) the cost per acre of hazardous fuels activities carried out during the period covered by the report;

(v) the region or system unit in which the acres are located; and

(vi) the effectiveness of the hazardous fuels reduction activities on reducing the risk of wildfire.

(3) TRANSPARENCY.—The Secretary concerned shall make each report submitted under paragraph (1) publicly available on the website of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior, as applicable.

(b) ACCURATE DATA COLLECTION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary concerned shall implement standardized procedures for tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities carried out by the Secretary concerned.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The standardized procedures required under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) regular, standardized data reviews of the accuracy and timely input of data used to track hazardous fuels reduction activities;

(B) verification methods that validate whether such data accurately correlates to the hazardous fuels reduction activities carried out by the Secretary concerned;

(C) an analysis of the short- and long-term effectiveness of the hazardous fuels reduction activities on reducing the risk of wildfire; and

(D) for hazardous fuels reduction activities that occur partially within the wildland-urban interface, methods to distinguish which acres are located within the wildland-urban interface and which acres are located outside the wildland-urban interface.

(3) REPORT.—Not later than 2 weeks after implementing the standardized procedures required under paragraph (1), the Secretary concerned shall submit to Congress a report that describes—

(A) such standardized procedures; and

(B) program and policy recommendations to Congress to address any limitations in tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities under this subsection.

(c) GAO STUDY.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(1) conduct a study on the implementation of this Act, including any limitations with respect to—

(A) reporting hazardous fuels reduction activities under subsection (a); or

(B) tracking data related to hazardous fuels reduction activities under subsection (b); and

(2) submit to Congress a report that describes the results of the study under paragraph (1).

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) HAZARDOUS FUELS REDUCTION ACTIVITY.—The term "hazardous fuels reduction activity"—

(A) means any vegetation management activity to reduce the risk of wildfire, including mechanical treatments and prescribed burning; and

(B) does not include the awarding of contracts to conduct hazardous fuels reduction activities.

(2) FEDERAL LANDS.—The term "Federal lands" means lands under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture.

(3) SECRETARY CONCERNED.—The term "Secretary concerned" means—

(A) the Secretary of Agriculture, with respect to National Forest System lands; and

(B) the Secretary of the Interior, with respect to public lands and units of the National Park System.

(4) WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE.—The term "wildland-urban interface" has the meaning given the term in section 101 of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (16 U.S.C. 6511).

(e) NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.—No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act, and the activities authorized by this Act are subject to the availability of appropriations made in advance for such purposes.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. 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 H.R. 1567, as amended, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of Representative TIFFANY's legislation, H.R. 1567, the Accurately Counting Risk Elimination Solutions, or ACRES Act.

This is a commonsense, good governance bill that will bring sorely needed transparency and accountability to the misleading way our Federal land managers are tracking and reporting hazardous fuel treatments.

We remain in the midst of a historic catastrophic wildfire crisis that has devoured an average of 7 million acres every year for the last two decades. This alarming figure is more than double the annual losses seen during the 1990s.

This worsening problem is directly linked to insufficient forest management, which has created a dangerous build-up of hazardous fuels in our forest. Despite the clear need to confront this crisis head on, Federal land management agencies like the Forest Service are still failing to increase the pace and scale of their treatments.

Even more concerning is the recent investigative reporting by NBC News that found that the Forest Service is overreporting the number of acres they treat annually by over 20 percent. This happens because the Forest Service will count the same piece of land toward its risk reduction goals multiple times if different treatments, such as prescribed thinning and burning, are completed on that land.

In some extreme cases, the Forest Service counted the same parcel of land 30 times, meaning the agency reported to Congress that they reduced hazardous fuels on 30 acres when, in fact, only one acre had received treatment.

This problem gets worse if treatments can span several years. For example, NBC News found an example of a hazardous fuels reduction project in southern California that lasted for 5 years. The Forest Service reported that they treated 744 acres of land when, in fact, only 173 acres had been treated.

If the Forest Service were treating at the order of magnitude that they need to be treating, these numbers wouldn't matter, but I think inflating the numbers is just a way to try to cover up the inadequate management that is happening. Instead of talking about hundreds of acres, we need to be talking about thousands and tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of acres that are being treated.

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This kind of reporting means that the Forest Service suggested to Congress and the public that they are doing as much as four times more work than they had actually accomplished. This is absolutely unacceptable, particularly in an area where wildfire risk and the risk to communities is extremely high.

This legislation simply requires the Forest Service to submit data to Congress annually that details their hazardous fuels reduction work by only counting each individual acre once even if multiple treatments were performed. This exact idea has been supported in reports from the Government Accountability Office and USDA's Office of Inspector General.

The fact that we need to pass legislation to tell the Forest Service to count the way that we all learned how to count should show us just how deep this problem runs within our agencies when it comes to confronting our catastrophic wildfire crisis.

By holding Federal land managers accountable for their actual work, the work that they are doing on the ground to help improve forest health and to

make our Nation's forests safer for all of us, we are required to do this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Representative TIFFANY for bringing this bill forward. I ask that we support this bill strongly, and I reserve the balance of my time.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, September 5, 2023.

Hon. BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: This letter confirms our mutual understanding regarding H.R. 1567, the "Accurately Counting Risk Elimination Solutions Act", or the "ACRES Act". Thank you for collaborating with the Committee on Agriculture on the matters within our jurisdiction.

The Committee on Agriculture will forego any further consideration of this bill. However, by foregoing consideration at this time, we do not waive any jurisdiction over any subject matter contained in this or similar legislation. The Committee on Agriculture also reserves the right to seek appointment of an appropriate number of conferees should it become necessary and ask that you support such a request.

We would appreciate a response to this letter confirming this understanding with respect to H.R. 1567 and request a copy of our letters on this matter be published in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during Floor consideration.

Sincerely,
GLENN "GT" THOMPSON,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES,
Washington, DC, September 6, 2023.

Hon. GLENN "GT" THOMPSON,
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I write regarding H.R. 1567, the Accurately Counting Risk Elimination Solutions Act or the ACRES Act, which was ordered reported by the Committee on Natural Resources on April 28, 2023.

I recognize that the bill contains provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Agriculture and appreciate your willingness to forgo action on the bill. I acknowledge that the Committee on Agriculture will not formally consider H.R. 1567 and agree that the inaction of your Committee with respect to the bill does not waive any jurisdiction over the subject matter contained therein.

I am pleased to support your request to name members of the Committee on Agriculture to any conference committee to consider such provisions. I will ensure that our exchange of letters is included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD during floor consideration of the bill. I appreciate your cooperation regarding this legislation.

Sincerely,
BRUCE WESTERMAN,
Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources.

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

I rise in support of H.R. 1567 introduced by my colleague from Wisconsin, Representative TIFFANY.

The United States Forest Service manages millions of acres of forestland, including vital watersheds, critical wildlife habitat, and countless outdoor recreational areas.

The Forest Service's 10-year Wildfire Crisis Strategy Implementation Plan

stresses the importance of fire-adapted landscapes and hazardous fuel treatments to build resilient forests.

Wildfire risk reduction projects are complex multistep processes requiring significant planning and investments often carried out over several years.

Therefore, it is important that we receive accurate, transparent, and accessible data on how forest management projects are being planned and implemented.

This legislation would require the agency to include a report in the President's annual budget on hazardous fuel activities carried out in a given fiscal year to account for each treated acre.

This ongoing reporting requirement will enhance transparency and accountability, providing critical information that can help guide investments in management of our national forests—including how we deploy our historic investments in wildfire risk reduction efforts that were included in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. TIFFANY), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Federal Lands and the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. TIFFANY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for his support throughout the process in regard to this bill.

There is very little that I can add to what the chairman of the Natural Resources Committee has laid out in his opening remarks in regard to the need for the ACRES Act. One of the few things I can add is a picture.

The picture to my right here shows the need for this bill. When the amount of acres that are being treated are not counted accurately, we end up with a situation where those acres that should be treated don't get treated. This is the Grizzly Flats fire a couple years ago that wiped out that community. The Forest Service knew that it was time that these treatments needed to be put in place, and they weren't, and a community was destroyed out in the great State of California.

This bill will bring transparency to the misleading and inaccurate way hazardous fuels treatments are reported. Decades of mismanagement of our Federal lands have left our forests overstocked and created tinderbox conditions.

We have long known the reported pace and scale of forest management has been insufficient to truly address our forest health crisis. There is a better way to manage our public lands, and that starts with holding our Federal land management agencies accountable by requiring accurate reporting on the effectiveness of their work in fuel reduction.

According to troubling reports, the situation is even worse than we have been led to believe, as agencies have

been overstating their treatments by over 20 percent.

Accurate reporting is necessary to broadly track the progress made on our larger wildfire mitigation targets, as well as individual projects.

The ACRES Act is a simple solution to hold our Federal agencies accountable to see the actual work they are doing to reduce the enormous risk of wildfire.

American taxpayers deserve to know they are getting what they paid for. This bill is one of the steps needed to help ensure that happens.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes.”

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I am prepared to close, and I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we do everything in our power to ensure that our forests are being managed properly. The ACRES Act is one small step in the right direction. It is a commonsense solution to a problem that really shouldn't even exist in the first place.

Again, I thank the ranking member in the minority for supporting this bill. The idea that we are actually moving toward more forest management is encouraging to me.

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

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss H.R. 1567, which will require the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior to submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activity.

Hazardous fuels reduction activity is an important effort to curb wildfires.

Some sources state that wildfires cost the United States upwards of \$3 billion in damage from 2022 to 2023 and have destroyed 616,486 acres across the United States since January of this year.

In the State of Texas alone, three quarters of the state have been issued a wildfire declaration.

In the city of Houston, wildfires have damaged the air quality and burned through several homes, negatively affecting many civilians' lives.

Due to both the environmental and economic havoc that wildfires present, it is important that we have accurate reporting to best prepare for these disasters.

This bill is important because it monitors the risk elimination solutions for wildfires in an accurate and dependable manner while also allowing oversight of the USDA and the Interior.

This bill is a first step to accurately determine effective methods to reduce the risk of wildfire and because of this I ask my colleagues to support this bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) that the House suspend

the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1567, 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. WESTERMAN. 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.

TREATING TRIBES AND COUNTIES AS GOOD NEIGHBORS ACT

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1450) to amend the Agricultural Act of 2014 to modify the treatment of revenue from timber sale contracts and certain payments made by counties to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior under good neighbor agreements, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1450

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 “Treating Tribes and Counties as Good Neighbors Act”.

SEC. 2. MODIFICATION OF THE TREATMENT OF CERTAIN REVENUE AND PAYMENTS UNDER GOOD NEIGHBOR AGREEMENTS.

(a) GOOD NEIGHBOR AUTHORITY.—Section 8206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(6), by striking “or Indian tribe”; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1)(A), by inserting “, Indian tribe,” after “Governor”; and

(B) in paragraph (2)(C)—

(i) by striking clause (i) and inserting the following:

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Funds received from the sale of timber by a Governor, an Indian tribe, or a county under a good neighbor agreement shall be retained and used by the Governor, Indian tribe, or county, as applicable—

“(I) to carry out authorized restoration services under the good neighbor agreement; and

“(II) if there are funds remaining after carrying out subclause (I), to carry out authorized restoration services under other good neighbor agreements.”; and

(ii) in clause (ii), by striking “2023” and inserting “2028”;

(C) in paragraph (3), by inserting “, Indian tribe,” after “Governor”; and

(D) by striking paragraph (4).

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 8206(a) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(B), by inserting “, Indian tribe,” after “Governor”; and

(2) in paragraph (5), by inserting “, Indian tribe,” after “Governor”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this Act apply to any project initiated pursuant to a good neighbor agreement (as defined in section 8206(a) of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (16 U.S.C. 2113a(a)))—

(1) before the date of enactment of this Act, if the project was initiated after the date of enactment of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-334; 132 Stat. 4490); or

(2) on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arkansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WESTERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1450, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support Congressman FULCHER's bill, the Treating Tribes and Counties as Good Neighbors Act.

This legislation would greatly enhance the collaborative stewardship of our Federal lands with Tribal and county partners. This is a bipartisan effort that passed out of the House Natural Resources and Agriculture Committees unanimously, and it is my hope that we can pass this thoughtful proposal in a similar fashion here on the House floor today.

The Federal Government owns roughly 640 million acres, an astonishing 28 percent of the entire country. States, Tribes, and counties all have a very clear interest in how these lands are managed.

When Federal lands are mismanaged, it is those closest to the lands that are most impacted. There is no clearer example of this reality than the forest health and wildfire crisis affecting vast swaths of Federal lands. Fire knows no boundaries between managed land and unmanaged lands. It knows no jurisdictional boundaries.

As Federal land managers struggle to address this worsening problem, Congress developed the Good Neighbor Authority to empower States to assist in active forest management efforts on Federal lands.

Under the Good Neighbor Authority, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management had the ability to authorize States to undertake restoration projects such as hazardous fuel reduction, habitat improvement, and road restoration on Federal lands within their borders.

By all accounts, this program for States has been very successful. Since 2014, over 490 projects have begun in 38 States. Just last year, approximately 274 million board feet of timber was sold under Good Neighbor agreements.

The 2018 farm bill extended Good Neighbor Authority to counties and Tribes in the hopes that even more active forest management could be accomplished. Unfortunately, the participation of counties and Tribes has been limited.