

government contracting with confidence and ease.

This is about more than just policy. It is about supporting our economy and ensuring that every entrepreneur has the opportunity to succeed.

Walking down the streets of my district, I meet a lot of small business owners every day. Often, I hear from these small businesses, the mom-and-pop shops, the entrepreneurs who are working so hard, that the complexity of the language contributes to the difficulty in obtaining Federal contracts.

This bill goes a long way in simplifying the matter, helping our small businesses that create most of the jobs to be able to acquire Federal contracts and work with the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I am prepared to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELAZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Again, I thank the sponsors for their work on this bill, and I believe that the goals are laudable.

It is a mandate of our committee to regularly review the processes that SBA and Federal agencies put in place to recruit, retain, and contract with small businesses—and do so with the goal of making it easier for them to compete for and win Federal awards.

Given that small businesses are leaving the Federal market at a record pace, and fewer small businesses are choosing to work with the government to begin with, we must use the tools available to us to provide remedies where we can.

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In closing, I thank the chairman and the sponsors of the legislation for their commitment and dedication to our Nation's small business owners.

National Small Business Week is a good reminder that we need to work together in a bipartisan way to create more opportunities for our Nation's 33 million entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't mention there are a sizeable number of Democratic bills that have been reported favorably from the committee but have not been scheduled for the floor.

In a spirit of bipartisanship, which is what National Small Business Week showcases to our constituents, I look forward to the chairman bringing more of these bills to the floor soon.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressmen LALOTA and THANEDAR for this bill. Interpreting the Federal contracting language should not be a barrier that small businesses need to overcome in order to compete for a government contract.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I hear what the rank-

ing member is saying. It is a great week for small business and the National Small Business Week we have ahead of us.

This is another example of what this committee is doing, Mr. Speaker, on bipartisan legislation that we are getting out to help America. We can get it done in Washington, D.C.

Mr. 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 Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7987.

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.

FIRE WEATHER DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2024

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4866) to direct the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to establish a program to improve fire weather and fire environment forecasting, detection, and local collaboration, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4866

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 "Fire Weather Development Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. FIRE WEATHER FORECASTING AND DETECTION.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, shall establish a program (in this Act referred to as the "Program") to improve fire weather and fire environment forecasting, detection, and delivery of products or services through collaboration with Federal and State agencies or departments, local emergency managers, and relevant entities.

(b) GOALS.—The goals of the Program shall be to develop and improve accurate fire weather and fire environment forecasts and warnings in order to reduce loss of life, reduce injuries, protect property, and reduce damage to the economy from wildfires. The Program shall seek to improve the assessment of fire weather and fire environments, the understanding and prediction of wildfires, and the communications regarding such assessments with State and local emergency officials in a timely and streamlined fashion, with a focus on improving the following:

(1) The prediction of ignition, intensification and spread of wildfires.

(2) The observation and monitoring of fire weather and fire environments.

(3) The forecast and communication of smoke dispersion from wildfires.

(4) Information dissemination and risk communication to develop more effective watch and warning products relating to wildfires.

(5) The early detection of wildfires, including pre-ignition analysis and ground condition characterizations.

(6) The development, testing, and deployment of novel tools and techniques related to understanding, monitoring, and predicting fire weather and fire environments.

(7) The understanding and association of climate change and its impacts on fire weather and fire environments.

(8) The unique characteristics, including observation or modeling requirements, related to fires at the wildland-urban interface.

(9) The forecasting and understanding of the impacts of prescribed burns (as such term is defined in section 2 of the Prescribed Burn Approval Act of 2016 (16 U.S.C. 551c-1 note)).

(c) COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS.—In developing the Program required under this section, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall solicit and take into consideration input from the weather industry, such academic entities as the Administrator considers appropriate, and other relevant stakeholders.

(d) ACTIVITIES.—To achieve the goals specified in subsection (b), the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may conduct research, development, testing, demonstration, and operational transition activities related to fire weather and fire environments, including regarding the following:

(1) Tools and services to inform, support, and complement active land management, local emergency personnel, the United States Forest Service, and State, local, and Tribal entities during their response and mitigation efforts.

(2) Sensing technologies, such as infrared, microwave, and active sensors suitable for potential deployment on spacecraft, aircraft, and unmanned aircraft systems, to improve the monitoring and forecasting of fire fuel and active wildfires, wildfire behavior models and forecasts, mapping efforts, and the prediction of wildfires and the impacts of such.

(3) Grid-based assessments and outlooks of fuel moisture and danger levels.

(4) Social and behavior sciences related to fire weather and fire environment warning products.

(5) Advanced satellite detection products coupled with atmosphere and fire weather modeling systems.

(6) Education and training to expand the number of students and researchers in areas of study and research related to wildfires, fire weather, and fire environments.

(7) Modeling systems to link long-term climate predictions to localized or general land management decisions.

(8) Communication and outreach to communities, energy utilities, owners and operators of critical infrastructure, and other relevant stakeholders regarding fire weather and fire environment risk.

(9) Stewardship and dissemination, to the extent practicable, of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientific data and related products and services in formats meeting shared standards to enhance the interoperability, usability, and accessibility of such data in order to better meet the needs of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, other Federal agencies, and relevant stakeholders.

(10) Improvement of spatial and temporal resolution observations.

(11) Any other topic or activity the Administrator determines relevant.

(e) NOVEL TOOLS FOR MONITORING AND PREDICTION.—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in consultation with the heads of the agencies specified in section 3, or other appropriate

stakeholders, including commercial partners, shall develop novel tools and technologies to support the activities of the Program and which may be applied to broader wildland fire research, monitoring, and mitigation activities, as practicable and appropriate.

(f) **EXTRAMURAL RESEARCH.**—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall collaborate with and support the non-Federal wildland fire research community, which includes institutions of higher education, private sector entities, nongovernmental organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, by making funds available through competitive grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements.

(g) **COMMERCIAL DATA.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in consultation with the heads of other Federal agencies and relevant stakeholders, may enter into contracts with one or more private sector entities to obtain additional airborne and space-based data and observations that may enhance or supplement the understanding, monitoring, and prediction, of fire weather and fire environments, and the relevant Program activities under this section.

(2) **CONSULTATION.**—In carrying out activities under paragraph (1), the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall consult with private sector entities through the National Advisory Committee on Wildfires under section 4 to identify needed tools and data that can be best provided by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration satellites and are most beneficial to wildfire and smoke detection and monitoring.

(h) **NONDUPLICATION.**—To the maximum extent practicable, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall consult with the National Interagency Fire Center, including the Joint Fire Science Program, to avoid duplication of activities under this section and ensure the Administration's focus on unique research activities best suited for transition to operations.

(i) **UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall—

(A) assess the role and potential benefits of unmanned aircraft systems to improve data collection in support of fire weather and fire environment modeling, meteorological observations, predictions, and forecasts;

(B) identify objectives for testing such systems' use for obtaining fire weather and fire environment observations, and other relevant activities; and

(C) transition unmanned aircraft systems technologies from research to operations as the Administrator considers appropriate.

(2) **BRIEFING.**—Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of the Act, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall brief the appropriate committees of Congress on the activities under paragraph (1).

(3) **PILOT PROGRAMS.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may conduct pilot programs of unmanned aircraft systems for fire weather and fire environment observations, including relating to the following:

(A) Testing of unmanned aircraft systems in approximations of real-world scenarios.

(B) Assessment of the utility of meteorological data collected from fire response and assessment aircraft.

(C) Input into appropriate models of collected data to predict fire behavior, including coupled atmosphere and fire models.

(D) Collection of best management practices for deployment of unmanned aircraft systems for fire weather and fire environment observations.

(4) **PROHIBITION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided under subparagraphs (B) and (C), the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may not procure any unmanned aircraft system that is manufactured or assembled by an entity in a foreign country of concern.

(B) **EXEMPTION.**—The prohibition under subparagraph (A) shall not apply to the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration if the Administrator determines, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security, that the procurement of an unmanned aircraft system is necessary for the sole purpose of marine or atmospheric science or management.

(C) **WAIVER.**—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may waive the prohibition under subparagraph (A) on a case-by-case basis—

(i) with the approval of the Secretary of Homeland Security; and

(ii) upon written or electronic notification to appropriate committees of Congress not later than 30 days after any such waiver.

(5) **AIRSPACE OPERATIONS SYSTEM.**—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in cooperation with the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, shall utilize the capabilities of unmanned aircraft systems as appropriate for fire weather and fire environment observations, and may use a wildfire airspace operations system that accounts for piloted aircraft, unmanned aircraft systems, and other new and emerging capabilities after such airspace operations system is developed and determined ready for operational use by the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(6) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated \$5,000,000 for fiscal year 2025 to carry out this subsection.

(j) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.**—The term “appropriate committees of Congress” means the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

(2) **CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE.**—The term “critical infrastructure” has the meaning given such term in section 1016(e) of Public Law 107–56 (42 U.S.C. 5195c(e)).

(3) **FOREIGN COUNTRY OF CONCERN.**—The term “foreign country of concern” has the meaning given such term in section 9901 of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (15 U.S.C. 4651).

(4) **INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.**—The term “institution of higher education” has the meaning given such term in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

(5) **UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM.**—The term “unmanned aircraft system” has the meaning given such term in section 44801 of title 49, United States Code.

(6) **WEATHER INDUSTRY.**—The term “weather industry” has the meaning given such term in section 2 of the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act of 2017 (15 U.S.C. 8501).

SEC. 3. INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON WILDFIRES.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall establish an interagency coordinating committee to be known as the “Interagency Coordinating Committee on Wildfires” (in this section referred to as the “Committee”). The chair of the Committee shall be the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

(b) **PURPOSE.**—The Committee shall coordinate the development of accurate and timely wildfire forecasting, detection, monitoring, and delivery of related products or services that best assist State and local emergency officials while avoiding duplication of activities.

(c) **MEMBERSHIP.**—In addition to the chair, the Committee shall be composed of the heads or appropriate designees of the following program agencies:

(1) The Federal Emergency Management Agency.

(2) The United States Fire Administration.

(3) The United States Forest Service.

(4) The National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

(5) The Department of the Interior.

(6) The Department of Agriculture.

(7) The United States Geological Survey.

(8) The Office of Science and Technology Policy.

(9) Any other Federal department or agency the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy considers appropriate.

(d) **STRATEGIC PLAN.**—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Committee shall submit to Congress a strategic plan for the Program that includes the following:

(1) A description of short-term, mid-term, and long-term objectives to achieve the purpose specified in subsection (b).

(2) A description of how agencies specified in subsection (c) will collaborate with stakeholders and take into account stakeholder needs and recommendations in developing such objectives.

(3) A description of existing and new observational and data infrastructure needed to accomplish such objectives.

(4) A description of the role of each such agency in achieving such objectives.

(5) Guidance regarding how the Committee's recommendations are best used in climate adaptation planning for Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial entities.

(e) **INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS.**—The heads of agencies specified in subsection (c) may enter into one or more interagency agreements providing for cooperation and collaboration in the development of wildfire forecasting, detection, and monitoring tools, instruments, technologies, and research to accomplish the purpose described in subsection (b).

(f) **COLLABORATION.**—The head of each agency specified in subsection (c) shall, to the extent practicable, increase engagement and cooperation with international, academic, State, and local communities regarding the infrastructure, data, and scientific research necessary to best advance the forecasting, detection, and monitoring of and preparation for wildfires.

SEC. 4. NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WILDFIRES.

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 90 days after the submission of the strategic plan required by section 3(d), the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy shall establish a national advisory committee to be known as the “National Advisory Committee on Wildfires” (in this section referred

to as the “Advisory Committee”). The Advisory Committee shall consist of not fewer than seven and not more than 15 members who are qualified to provide advice regarding wildfire forecasting, detection, monitoring, and delivery of related products or services, including from the following entities:

- (A) Research and academic institutions.
- (B) Public communication or broadcast entities.
- (C) Emergency management agencies.
- (D) State, local, or Tribal governments.
- (E) The National Association of State Foresters.
- (F) Business communities.
- (G) Other entities as designated by the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

(2) **PROHIBITION.**—Members of the Advisory Committee may not be employees of the Federal Government.

(b) **ASSESSMENT.**—The Advisory Committee shall offer assessments and recommendations relating to the following:

- (1) Tailored forecasting, detection, and monitoring products and tools.
- (2) Communication and delivery methods of wildfire forecasting, detection, and monitoring information.
- (3) Opportunities to streamline Federal forecasting, monitoring, and detection information to local emergency personnel and communities.
- (4) The management, coordination, implementation, and activities of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Wildfires under section 3.

(5) The effectiveness of the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Wildfires in meeting its purposes.

(c) **COMPENSATION.**—Members of the Advisory Committee shall serve without compensation.

(d) **REPORTS.**—Not less frequently than biennially, the Advisory Committee shall report to the Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy on the assessments carried out under subsection (b) and its recommendations for ways to improve the coordination and dissemination of wildfire forecasts, warnings, and detection and monitoring information.

(e) **CHARTER.**—Notwithstanding section 1013(b)(2) of title 5, United States Code, the Advisory Committee shall not be required to file a charter subsequent to its initial charter, filed under section 1008(c) of such title, before the termination date specified in subsection (f) of this section.

(f) **TERMINATION.**—The Advisory Committee shall terminate on September 30, 2028.

(g) **CONFLICT OF INTEREST.**—An Advisory Committee member shall recuse himself or herself from any Advisory Committee activity in which he or she has an actual pecuniary interest.

SEC. 5. ESTABLISHMENT OF FIRE WEATHER TESTBED.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall establish a fire weather testbed to enable engagement across the Federal Government, State and local governments, academia, private and federally funded research laboratories, the private sector, and end-users in order to evaluate the accuracy and usability of technology, models, fire weather products and services, and other research to accelerate the implementation, transition to operations, and use of new capabilities by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Federal and land management agencies, and other relevant stakeholders.

(b) **RESOURCES.**—In carrying out this section, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may not transfer or reprogram any funds, detail

any personnel, or make use of any infrastructure from cooperative institutes of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in existence as of the date of the enactment of this Act for the fire weather testbed established under subsection (a).

(c) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated \$4,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2025 through 2028 to carry out this section.

SEC. 6. INCIDENT METEOROLOGIST WORKFORCE.

(a) **WORKFORCE AND TRAINING ASSESSMENT.**—Not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall submit to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate the results of an assessment of National Weather Service workforce and training challenges for Incident Meteorologists, and a roadmap for overcoming such challenges. Such assessment shall take into consideration information technology support, logistical and administrative operations, anticipated weather and climate conditions, and feedback from relevant stakeholders, and shall include, to the maximum extent practicable, an identification by the National Weather Service of the following:

- (1) The expected number of Incident Meteorologists needed over the next five years.
- (2) Potential hiring authorities necessary to overcome any identified workforce and training challenges.
- (3) Alternative services or assistance options the National Weather Service could provide to meet operational needs.

(b) **OVERTIME PAY.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Any premium pay for services performed by Incident Meteorologists of the National Weather Service that are determined by the Secretary of Commerce to be primarily related to emergency wildland fire suppression activities shall be disregarded in calculating the aggregate of such employee's basic pay and premium pay for purposes of a limitation under section 5547 of title 5, United States Code, or under any other provision of law.

(2) **RATES.**—Section 5542(a)(5) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting “, the National Weather Service,” after “Interior”.

SEC. 7. RESEARCH ON WILDLAND FIRE COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—

(1) **PUBLIC SAFETY RESEARCH.**—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director, acting through the head of the Public Safety and Communications Research Division and in consultation with the Fire Research Division and technology manufacturers, shall carry out research on the following:

(A) Public safety communication coordination standards among Federal, State, Tribal, and local wildland firefighters, fire management response officials, and member agencies.

(B) Improving and integrating existing communications systems to transmit secure real-time data, alerts, and advisories to and from fire management response officials and wildland firefighters.

(2) **FIELD TESTING AND MEASUREMENT OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND TECHNOLOGY.**—The Public Safety and Communications Research Division, in consultation with the Fire Research Division and member agencies, shall conduct both live and virtual field testing of equipment, software, and other technologies to determine current times of information dissemination and develop

standards for the delivery of useful and secure real-time data among member agencies, fire management response officials, and wildland firefighters, based on findings from research under paragraph (1).

(b) **RECOMMENDATIONS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Director shall develop and publish recommendations to improve public safety communication coordination standards among wildland first responders and fire management response officials.

(2) **TRANSMITTAL.**—The Director shall transmit the recommendations under paragraph (1) to the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Science and Technology Policy for member agencies to implement.

(3) **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The Director shall submit to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report containing the recommendations published under paragraph (1).

(B) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—Not later than 1 year after the date of the publication of the Director's recommendations under paragraph (1), the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a report on the extent to which member agencies have implemented such recommendations.

(c) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **DIRECTOR.**—The term “Director” means the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

(2) **MEMBER AGENCY.**—The term “member agency” means a member agency of the National Interagency Fire Center, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, United States Fire Administration, and the Department of Defense.

(3) **WILDLAND FIREFIGHTER.**—The term “wildland firefighter” means any person who participates in wildland firefighting activities.

(4) **FIRE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE OFFICIALS.**—The term “fire management response officials” means regional fire directors, deputy regional fire directors, agency officials who directly oversee fire operations, fire management officers, and individuals serving on incident management teams.

(5) **TECHNOLOGY MANUFACTURERS.**—The term “technology manufacturers” means private sector entities that manufacture communications technologies used by Federal, State, Tribal, or local wildland fire authorities.

SEC. 8. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) **FIRE ENVIRONMENT.**—The term “fire environment” means—

(A) the environmental conditions, such as soil moisture, vegetation, topography, snowpack, atmospheric temperature, moisture, and wind, that influence—

- (i) fuel and fire behavior; and
 - (ii) smoke dispersion and transport; and
- (B) the associated environmental impacts occurring during and after fire events.

(2) **FIRE WEATHER.**—The term “fire weather” means the weather conditions that influence the start, spread, character, or behavior of wildfires or fires at the wildland-urban interface and relevant meteorological and chemical phenomena, including air quality, smoke, and meteorological parameters such as relative humidity, air temperature, wind

speed and direction, and atmospheric composition and chemistry, including emissions and mixing heights.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIMENEZ). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUCAS. 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. 4866, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4866, the Fire Weather Development Act of 2024, offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. MIKE GARCIA), my friend and colleague on the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology.

This bill directs the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to improve the forecasting and detection of fire weather as well as increase collaboration with State and local partners to predict and fight fires.

Just over a month ago, the largest wildfire in U.S. history burned over a million acres in the Texas Panhandle and parts of my district in western Oklahoma.

The Smokehouse Creek fire, as it is now known, was the result of extremely dry and windy conditions that saw a half million acres burn within 24 hours of the fire's start.

With two fatalities, along with hundreds of homes and thousands of cattle lost, the effects of this fire will be felt in this region of our country for many years.

If it wasn't for a shift in wind direction at just the right time, my property would have been a part of that destruction.

At home, I had to take the precaution of moving cattle into fields that were less likely to burn, if the fire kept coming our way.

Looking back on this event today, there is one good thing we can take from it: We know with certainty that the National Weather Service has the tools and capability for fire weather forecasting and prediction that can protect lives and property.

The National Weather Service Storm Prediction Center began mentioning the potential for fire weather conditions in their extended forecast 6 days before the Smokehouse Creek fire started.

In my case, I closely monitored this weather outlook and made critical decisions based on the weather data, models, and forecasts that were available.

While two lives were lost, and that is two too many, it is likely there would have been more, if not for the work of the National Weather Service.

With an increased innovative focus provided by direction from Congress and the necessary resources, NOAA and the NWS can expand these capabilities and ensure every region of our country is prepared for the extreme weather events of the future.

Every citizen can and should have the most accurate tools readily available, just like I did. The bill we are considering today, the Fire Weather Development Act, is a critical step in that direction.

H.R. 4866 directs NOAA to develop and improve accurate fire weather and fire environment forecasts and warnings.

It places an emphasis on developing and using novel technologies such as advanced weather, advanced satellite detection paired with AI modeling systems, or active sensors for potential deployment on unmanned aircraft systems.

These technologies will improve wildfire behavior models, mapping efforts, and the monitoring of fire fuel and active fires, while also eliminating the risk of sending firefighters and operators into potential danger.

The Fire Weather Development Act also recognizes the critical need for Federal collaboration by establishing an Interagency Coordinating Committee on Wildfires.

With all the relevant bodies working together, this committee will coordinate the development of accurate and timely wildfire forecasting, detection, monitoring, and delivery of products or services that best assist State and local emergency officials.

Lastly, this bill establishes an independent National Advisory Council on Wildfires to ensure that local officials, communities, and people who are directly affected by wildfires have a seat at the table and can provide input on what tools or services are most needed.

I thank Representative MIKE GARCIA for introducing this bill along with his cosponsors, Representatives CARAVEO and KIM.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to join us in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, in Hawaii, California, Colorado, and Michigan, wildfires are posing an increasing threat to the lives and livelihoods of so many Americans.

Over the last 30 years, the wildfire season in the West alone has lengthened by several months, and the total number of acres burned per year has nearly doubled.

Climate change has contributed to warmer temperatures and drier conditions, causing more frequent and intense wildland fires.

Understanding the fundamental science behind wildfires, including the impacts of climate change, is abso-

lutely essential to our ability to improve the prediction and forecasting of increasingly severe wildfires.

Another essential element to our response to wildfires is the effective communication of information and risks to land managers and to those living in wildfire-vulnerable areas.

To accomplish that, we have H.R. 4866, a phenomenal bipartisan piece of legislation to direct NOAA to establish a program that will increase the accuracy of, and effectively communicate, fire forecasts and warnings.

The brave and tireless work of incident management teams is absolutely the cornerstone of successful wildfire responses. This includes incident meteorologists, or IMETs, who work around the clock at active fire sites for days or weeks at a time, providing lifesaving information about wildfire and environmental conditions to firefighters and managers.

This bill also allows NOAA's National Weather Service to fully compensate IMETs for overtime work during active fire events, which will expand the capacity of IMETs to conduct their essential work.

The bill also requires NOAA to leverage collaborations with State, local, and Tribal governments, Federal agencies, academia, and the private sector to decrease the loss of lives and property from wildfires and support fire response personnel.

I truly commend Congressman MIKE GARCIA and my colleague from Colorado (Ms. CARAVEO) for working on this important legislation that will truly put the United States in a better position to respond to increasing threats of wildfires.

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

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. MIKE GARCIA) to speak on this bill.

Mr. MIKE GARCIA of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for his leadership on this bill.

In my district, it is all about security. It is about economic security. It is about national security. It is about school security, neighborhood security, and yes, border security, as well as protecting Social Security.

If you live in my district, you will recognize that this bill, H.R. 4866, is truly about security. My district in north L.A. County has the most dense and largest interface of wildlands with human beings and housing developments.

They are all too familiar, my constituents, with the dangers that wildfires pose to our homes and to our livelihoods.

For my constituents, wildfire mitigation isn't a red or blue issue. It is not a Republican or Democratic issue. It is a life-or-death issue. That is why I have made it a top priority since coming to Washington to improve our ability to predict and to fight these disasters in order to keep our firefighters,

our homes, and our families safe from harm.

My bill, H.R. 4866, the Fire Weather Development Act, is a strong bipartisan step forward in a constant fight against these catastrophic wildfires.

This bill will dramatically improve NOAA's ability to predict, prevent, and respond to wildfires and to get information down to the local emergency responders.

It would be easy, the last 2 years have been relatively calm fire seasons, to get lulled into a false sense of security in southern California, but the next big fire season is right around the corner.

We have had 2 years of record rain that has spurred an explosion of grass and dense shrubbery across the hills in my district.

As the weather starts to dry out again, so will the forest, transforming greenery into an abundance of fuel and thus that a stray spark or lightning strike can set ablaze in a moment's notice.

Southern California will be a tinderbox this fall, and the time to prevent wildfires is now. We can't allow ourselves to wait for another wildfire season like we had in 2020 where California lost over 4 million acres and 10,000 buildings due to mismanagement in years prior, like the fires that we saw in Texas just recently and in Hawaii just last year, so horrifically taking the lives of so many Americans.

Half the wildland in my district falls in Federal forests, so this is very important that we, at the Federal level, take care of this issue.

We need to be investing now, not just for our prediction efforts, but to ensure that our firefighters have every possible tool at their disposal to respond.

Firefighters are like frontline combat operators against wildfires, and there is no reason they shouldn't be as well-equipped as they fight fires as our soldiers are when they fight our enemies overseas.

They need the tools this bill provides; advanced imaging to see the fires before they grow out of control, drones to reach the small and remote fires, and improved communications to adjust the forward line of combat operations quickly and safely.

Just like our soldiers, we also need to send the firefighters into dangerous situations only when it is absolutely necessary.

My bill invests in fuel mapping, unmanned vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles, wildfire behavior models and more, and all the steps to make 1 firefighter fight like 10 and to minimize the need to put them in danger. More importantly, to make sure that when they fight, they come home each night.

The side benefit of all of this is there is an ongoing fight against insurance companies in California, and this is going to improve lives outside of just the wildfire events as well.

□ 1645

This is a constant threat, and we haven't done a good job in California managing our wildlands.

As a result of that, we have seen a disastrous effect on livelihoods and the economy, especially in southern California. The threat has gotten so bad that insurance companies are jacking up rates on current customers and have stopped offering policies to any new homeowners in my district.

I have heard countless stories from constituents about their house fire policies going up anywhere from 5 to 10 times what they were just in one year. I had a church pastor reach out this last weekend, Mr. Speaker, who said his premiums went from \$3,000 a year for his fire insurance to \$30,000 a year for a very small church.

To be clear, this bill is not a silver bullet that is going to solve the insurance problem. That is a problem made in Sacramento that this will hopefully mitigate, but there is still a whole lot of bad policies coming out of Sacramento that need to be addressed.

If we can drastically improve our ability to protect people's homes, it will hopefully be a massive step in the right direction and allow the insurance companies to come back to California.

I thank Chairman LUCAS for his leadership on this bill and allowing this to come to the floor. I thank Ms. CARAVEO for her cosponsorship of this bill. I urge my colleagues to support the Fire Weather Development Act to ensure the security of our constituents in all districts, not just mine, but throughout the Nation that face the daily threat of catastrophic wildfires.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Colorado (Ms. CARAVEO).

Ms. CARAVEO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 4866, the Fire Weather Development Act. I thank my colleagues, Congressman MIKE GARCIA and Congresswoman KIM, for working with me to run this bipartisan piece of legislation. Thank you also to Ranking Member LOFGREN and Chairman LUCAS for their steadfast leadership.

Sadly, Coloradans are no strangers to wildfires, and we know that wildfires are no longer seasonal but can happen year-round. The impacts of these fires are felt long after the flames are extinguished and have lasting effects on our environment, economy, infrastructure, and more. With that, we are also seeing wildfires begin to encroach on communities that are not used to experiencing fires.

The Marshall fire in Colorado was the most expensive wildfire in our State's history and was primarily driven by an extreme windstorm that blew the fire into suburban parts of Colorado right next door to my district. With the total monetary cost of the Marshall fire estimated at \$2 billion, it is critical that we continue to invest in new ways to understand fire weather.

This is where our bill, the Fire Weather Development Act, comes in.

This bill will give NOAA the tools it needs to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to fire weather technology by allowing the agency to do things like access airborne and space-based data to enhance fire weather and fire environment monitoring. The bill also gives NOAA the ability to determine drone usage to improve data collection and even conduct drone pilot programs. Finally, the bill helps our local and State responders even more through several provisions focused on improving communications, especially around forecasting.

The Front Range and northern Colorado know how important it is that we do what we can to better predict fire weather, especially when it means protecting our homes and economic well-being.

In Colorado's Eighth District, we have a burgeoning energy sector and the largest agriculture economy in the State, but as we saw in Texas earlier this year, one wildfire can pose serious damage to that. By passing the Fire Weather Development Act, we are ensuring that we keep bolstering the tools we have to respond to fire weather. I look forward to continuing to work with Representatives MIKE GARCIA and KIM to get this commonsense solution in this bill across the finish line as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. STEVENS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for closing.

Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves at a prominent moment here on the House floor, hopefully seeing the passage of H.R. 4866 to address some of these extraordinary fire considerations that have taken place. I continue to encourage my colleagues to join those of us who do this hard and great work on the Science Committee to pass this bill.

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

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

Over the last 5 years, the average annual cost of Federal firefighting suppression has been \$2.8 billion. While forest and land management can help prevent wildfires, long- and short-term weather observations, or modeling, play a critical role in limiting their spread and damage.

The Fire Weather Development Act takes immediate action to address this by increasing NOAA and the National Weather Service's activities to best protect lives and property at risk of wildfires.

I again thank the gentleman from California (Mr. MIKE GARCIA) for working tirelessly to get this bill across the finish line and increasing the lifesaving services available to his constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all 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 gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr.

LUCAS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4866, as amended.

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. LUCAS. 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.

CLEAN ENERGY DEMONSTRATION TRANSPARENCY ACT OF 2023

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1069) to amend the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to require reporting regarding clean energy demonstration projects, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1069

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 “Clean Energy Demonstration Transparency Act of 2023”.

SEC. 2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

Subsection (h) of section 41201 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (42 U.S.C. 1886i) is amended by adding at the end following new paragraph:

“(3) FURTHER REPORTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this paragraph and at least semiannually thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate a report, and make publicly available in digital online format, that contains, for the period covered by each such report, for each covered project or other demonstration project administered or supported by the program, the following:

“(i) A copy of any initial contracts or financial assistance agreements executed between the Department and an award recipient, including any related documentation, as the Secretary determines appropriate.

“(ii) A list of any material, technical, or financial milestones that have or have not been met.

“(iii) Any material modifications to the scope, schedule, funding profile (including cost-share requirements), project partners or participating entities, or budget of the project.

“(B) STREAMLINING.—To the extent practicable, the Secretary may synchronize the reports required under subparagraph (A) with other required reports, such as those required under—

“(i) paragraph (1); and

“(ii) section 9005(e) of the Energy Act of 2020 (42 U.S.C. 7256c(e); enacted as division Z of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021).”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and the gentle-

woman from Michigan (Ms. STEVENS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extemporaneous material on H.R. 1069, the bill now under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1069, the Clean Energy Demonstration Transparency Act of 2023 offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CAREY). This commonsense legislation will provide Congress with the necessary tools to conduct thorough oversight on the Department of Energy's growing number of demonstration projects.

Specifically, H.R. 1069 requires the Secretary of Energy to report to Congress on all demonstration projects administered by the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations. As part of this report, the Secretary must include all contracts, milestones, schedules, and funding profiles, including cost-share agreements.

DOE established OCED to carry out the technology demonstration projects that were authorized in the Energy Act of 2020 and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This includes projects with bipartisan support such as the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program and Long-Duration Energy Storage Demonstrations.

Historically, DOE's applied energy offices have administered these programs, creating a natural pipeline from the lab to the field. With the creation of OCED, DOE put these activities in a new and untested office, separating expertise and adding a new layer of bureaucracy. At the same time, the infrastructure bill and the Inflation Reduction Act appropriated \$27 billion to OCED to fund these projects.

This organizational change and influx of money should concern every lawmaker given previous instances of DOE's mismanagement of demonstration projects. Already, OCED has been slow to award recipients and struggled to identify unique capabilities not covered by the applied energy offices.

Currently, Congress lacks the necessary safeguards and the ability to conduct rigorous oversight over OCED and its demonstration projects. For example, when the Science Committee tried to get more information on DOE waiving the cost-share requirement for a multimillion-dollar project, DOE had no requirement to document or justify their decision.

H.R. 1069 requires DOE to submit semiannual reports which include all contracts, agreements, and funding breakdowns, and enables Congress to have the tools to protect taxpayers'

dollars, hold OCED accountable, and ensure a truly competitive selection process based on merits.

I am proud to cosponsor this bill, along with Ranking Member LOFGREN, and I extend my appreciation to Representative CAREY for continuing his leadership on this issue despite no longer sitting on the Science Committee.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the moments where we find ourselves so grateful for the House RECORD, as we yet again are moving to pass a bipartisan piece of legislation, H.R. 1069, the Clean Energy Demonstration Transparency Act in a bipartisan fashion here, forever commemorated on the House floor.

We are recognizing that here in the United States of America, our phenomenal Department of Energy, now being run by Michigan's former Governor, Secretary Jennifer Granholm, is doing clean energy. These are clean energy projects that are coming to fruition because of the Invest in America agenda promulgated by the President of the United States, the great Joe Biden.

We have already in place, 3 years on, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which established a first of its kind clean energy demonstration office centrally coordinating the Department of Energy's larger-scale clean energy technology development. I really appreciate when we can say, as Democrats and Republicans, yes to transparency because we do want the world to see that we are doing clean energy, and we will lead the sustainability vision for the future.

We also know that \$25 billion coming out of this Bipartisan Infrastructure Law legislation is funding and scaling emerging technologies such as clean hydrogen and advanced nuclear energy, which is needed to tackle some of our most pressing climate challenges and certainly to achieve our net zero goals that we have established for ourselves.

One of the initiatives that has been supported by the Office of Clean Energy Demonstrations, one that I am very excited about and has great meaning for us in Michigan, the automotive supply chain innovation capital of the world, is hydrogen hubs. We have these hydrogen hubs that have come to fruition or are being invested in out of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Certainly, as I mentioned, these hubs are helping my State of Michigan. We have got the Midwest Alliance for Clean Hydrogen, and it is going to leverage my State's famous industrial power to lead the Nation in this clean energy hydrogen production.

The hubs are going to benefit from this transparency legislation, this network of hydrogen hubs which are seeking to lower our emissions as a Nation