

they have regarding how they will handle computer-generated and mass comments in the rulemaking process.

Further, this legislation requires the Office of Management and Budget to issue implementing guidance to agencies and requires the Government Accountability Office to submit a report to Congress.

It is time that our Federal agencies adapt their processes to accommodate the latest technologies.

I thank Representative CLAY HIGGINS for his idea and work in developing this forward-thinking legislation.

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

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

I rise in support of the Comment Integrity and Management Act again, as I was saying. I was very eager to support my friend Mr. HIGGINS' legislation here.

The basic issue is that it has gotten easier for people to post comments online in a rulemaking. That is a really good thing because it means that the process of implementing regulations is more accessible, more transparent, more open, and more participatory, but a number of the agencies have found, I think, what Members of Congress have found. Sometimes you get the same paragraph 100 times, 1,000 times, or 3,000 times.

This bill would simply allow agencies to post a representative sample of mass comments like this. If they choose to do that, they still are required to post the number of such comments received so that the volume of public sentiment is still fairly and effectively registered.

The bill would also require agencies, within 1 year, to establish policies for handling computer-generated comments, which is a growing concern to manage with the recent remarkable advances in artificial intelligence.

I am eager to hear from Mr. HIGGINS because I view his legislation as one that supports the administrative rulemaking process, which is so much under attack these days. There are people who say that we shouldn't have rules and regulations. Of course, the way our system works is that, in Congress, we pass laws like the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act, but we don't get into all the fine details. That is left to the executive branch to do a rulemaking. That, too, is an open process where people can register their concerns and send comments in.

We want to make sure that that process continues to operate effectively and is not overwhelmed and overburdened by AI and computer-duplicated comments.

□ 1630

So I thank Mr. HIGGINS, and I thank Chairman COMER and his staff for working with our side to address some of the concerns we had with the original language.

I understand the administration and some outside groups have also reg-

istered some concerns about the legislation that have been addressed. We have worked with them and our majority counterparts to incorporate their feedback into this revised version of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the bill at this time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. HIGGINS).

Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Kansas for yielding. I appreciate the commentary of my friend and colleague, the ranking member of the Oversight and Accountability Committee, Representative RASKIN.

It may interest you to know, Mr. Speaker, that Representative RASKIN and I have worked in the spirit of mutual respect and camaraderie for 8 years now. We have enjoyed many vigorous debates in this body, and I find it encouraging that he has risen enthusiastically now twice in support of my bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7528, the Comment Integrity and Management Act. This bill is essential in the digital age where our constituents engage with us more and more through electronic means. It seeks to safeguard citizens' First Amendment right to participate in the Federal rulemaking process.

This participation includes the invaluable process of submitting public comments on proposed Federal rules and regulations, comments that help shape the very fabric of our government.

With the advent of digital technology and the rise of artificial intelligence being of increasing import, the channels for such participation have expanded providing broader access but also introducing new challenges. These challenges include computer-generated comments which can obscure genuine public input and hinder our agencies' ability to gauge public sentiment effectively.

The cornerstone of this bill is its commitment to ensuring that every comment submitted by electronic means comes from a real person, not an automated program. By requiring human verification, we are taking a significant step towards preserving the authenticity of public input.

Furthermore, the Comment Integrity and Management Act equips our agencies with the flexibility and tools necessary to efficiently manage the comments they receive. This includes the authority to identify and process computer-generated and mass comments, ensuring that they are handled transparently and effectively.

Additionally, the legislation directs the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance on best practices for managing electronic comments and mandates a report for the United States Government Accountability Office on the prevalence and impact of computer-generated comments.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to recognize the importance of adapting our processes to the realities of the 21st century. It is imperative that we ensure every American is heard and that genuine public input is not drowned out by the noise of automation.

This bill represents a good government approach to embracing technological advancements while safeguarding the principles of public participation and transparency in the rulemaking process.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to salute the distinguished gentleman from Louisiana for making the administrative rulemaking process up-to-date, rapid, transparent, and effective for all of us so we can keep it going.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATURNER. In closing, Mr. Speaker, H.R. 7528 helps ensure every American is heard and not drowned out by an influx of computer-generated comments.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to support this necessary 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 Kansas (Mr. LATURNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7528, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MAIL TRAFFIC DEATHS REPORTING ACT OF 2024

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7527), to direct the United States Postal Service to issue regulations requiring Postal Service employees and contractors to report to the Postal Service traffic crashes involving vehicles carrying mail that result in injury or death, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7527

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 "Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. REGULATIONS ON TRAFFIC CRASH DEATHS AND INJURIES INVOLVING VEHICLES TRANSPORTING MAIL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Postmaster General of the Postal Service shall issue regulations to require the collection, tracking, and public reporting of information related to deaths and injuries resulting from traffic crashes involving vehicles transporting mail. Such regulations shall establish appropriate mechanisms to monitor

and enforce compliance with the reporting requirements of this Act and may utilize existing reporting mechanisms in use at the time of enactment of this Act.

(b) **REPORTS ON CRASHES.**—

(1) **EMPLOYEES.**—Any employee of the Postal Service engaged in the transportation of mail shall report to the Postal Service any traffic crash involving the vehicle the employee was operating during such transportation that resulted in injury or death not later than three days after such crash.

(2) **CONTRACTORS.**—Any contractor (of any tier) of the Postal Service engaged in the transportation of mail shall report to the Postal Service any traffic crash involving the vehicle the contractor was operating during such transportation that resulted in injury or death not later than three days after such crash.

(3) **CONTENTS.**—Any report submitted under paragraph (1) or (2) shall include detailed information describing, at a minimum, the crash, including the date, time, location, nature of the crash, information identifying the contractor, number of injuries, fatalities, and any contributing factors to the crash. An employee or contractor (as the case may be) shall update the report, in such form and manner as the Postal Service deems appropriate, to reflect any change in crash-caused injuries or fatalities.

(4) **ACCOMMODATIONS IN EVENT OF INJURY.**—The Postal Service shall provide for procedures under which reports may be submitted under this subsection under an alternative deadline in the event a Postal Service employee or contractor is unable to submit a report due to serious injury resulting from the applicable crash.

(5) **STANDARD FORM.**—The Postmaster General shall create a standard form available to Postal Service employees and contractors for the purposes of submitting reports under this subsection.

(c) **DATABASE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Postal Service shall maintain a continuously updated internal digital database that includes comprehensive information related to deaths and injuries from traffic crashes involving vehicles transporting mail.

(2) **CONTENTS.**—The database shall include any information provided by Postal Service employees and contractors under subsection (b).

(d) **REPORT.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Postal Service shall make available to the public an annual report summarizing information related to deaths and injuries from traffic crashes involving vehicles transporting mail.

(2) **CONTENTS.**—The report shall include aggregated statistics, trends, and analysis to enhance transparency and accountability.

(3) **PRIVACY.**—Information in the report shall be made available to the public in a manner that does not personally identify any Postal Service employee, contractor, or any other individual.

(e) **PENALTIES.**—Any Postal Service contractor who fails to report a traffic crash within the deadline prescribed under subsection (b) shall be subject to appropriate penalties as determined appropriate by the Postal Service, including fines, suspension of contracts, or termination of contracts. The Postal Service may take into account the severity of the applicable traffic crash and the frequency of noncompliance with the requirements of this Act by the applicable Postal Service contractor when determining which penalty to apply (if any).

(f) **CRASH DEFINED.**—In this Act, the term “crash” —

(1) means an occurrence involving a commercial motor vehicle operating on a high-

way in interstate or intrastate commerce which results in—

(A) a fatality;

(B) bodily injury to a person who, as a result of the injury, immediately receives medical treatment away from the scene of the accident; or

(C) one or more motor vehicles incurring disabling damage as a result of the accident, requiring at least one of the motor vehicle to be transported away from the scene by a tow truck or other motor vehicle; and

(2) does not include—

(A) an occurrence involving only boarding and alighting from a stationary motor vehicle; or

(B) an occurrence involving only the loading or unloading of cargo.

The **SPEAKER pro tempore**. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. **LATURNER**) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. **RASKIN**) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. **LATURNER**. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7527, which requires U.S. Postal Service employees and contractors to report traffic crashes that result in injury or death to the Postal Service.

Last year, The Wall Street Journal published an article alleging that the Postal Service contracted with low-cost trucking companies that did not follow highway safety regulations. They also reported that postal contractors have been involved in car crashes that have killed 79 people in the last 3 years.

To conduct oversight of this important topic, Congress needs to be informed. The Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act requires the Postal Service to report to Congress any traffic crashes that result in injury or death.

Under the bill, Postal Service employees and contractors will have 3 days to report a traffic accident to the Postal Service. These reports will include, at minimum, the date, time, location, nature of the crash, information identifying the contractor, and number of injuries and fatalities. The Postal Service will maintain a comprehensive internal digital database of this information.

The Postal Service is also required to compile a publicly available report summarizing annual stats related to injuries and deaths from traffic accidents.

I thank Representative **CONNOLLY** and House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chairman **JAMES COMER** for bringing this necessary legislation to the consideration of the House.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation introduced by Mr. **CONNOLLY**.

Between 2021 and 2023, truck drivers contracted by the Postal Service were involved in at least 68 different traffic accidents, and 79 people were killed in them.

On February 27, 2024, the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General found that the Postal Service failed to record all mail transport accidents in a central database, including accidents involving truck driver contractors. As a result, the Postal Service failed to have a complete understanding of traffic accidents and the comprehensive safety performance of its mail transport drivers.

With this new information from the inspector general, it is clear that the level of fatalities across this period could even have been higher.

The Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act, the excellent bill brought forward by Mr. **CONNOLLY**, would resolve these serious oversight deficiencies by increasing transparency, comprehension, and understanding of the full scale of mail transport accidents and ultimately improve safety for postal transport drivers and for the public. The bill would require all Postal Service mail transport drivers, including 4,600 postal trucking contractors, to adhere to a range of reporting, tracking, and accountability measures.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Subcommittee Ranking Member **GERRY CONNOLLY** from Virginia for his great leadership in strengthening Postal Service mail transport safety, and I am pleased to support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. **CONNOLLY**).

Mr. **CONNOLLY**. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend from Maryland, the distinguished ranking member, for yielding, and the Republican manager from Kansas.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the bill, the Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act. This necessary bill which I am co-leading with my distinguished colleague, the chairman of the Oversight and Accountability Committee, Mr. **COMER**, has strong, bipartisan support. It passed through our committee 40-0.

I am thrilled that the chairman and I could partner, write, and introduce the Mail Traffic Deaths Reporting Act, which requires the United States Postal Service to collect, track, and report on serious crashes and fatalities involving vehicles transporting U.S. postal mail.

The chairman and I have both met with the families of truck crash victims. We have heard their painful stories and are committed to stopping preventable tragedies involving mail transport. These families-turned-advocates welcome this legislation which is

endorsed by the Truck Safety Coalition.

In June of 2022, the Godines family was traveling back to their home in Gillette, Wyoming. Traveling behind the family on I-25 as they passed Greeley, Colorado, was a contract freight truck carrying U.S. mail on a U.S. Postal Service contract.

The truck's brakes were out of alignment, it was uninsured, and its driver had no commercial driver's license. When that truck carrying U.S. delivery material slammed into the back of the Godines' family vehicle, in an instant, Mr. Speaker, three generations of Godines were killed. They lost their lives, including a 3-month old baby, Tessa Leigh. Safety concerns about the freight contract trucking practices at the Postal Service have been increasing ever since.

Between 2020 and 2023, as has been noted, at least 79 people have been killed in crashes involving trucks contracted by the Postal Service. The true number is higher because just last year we learned that the Postal Service did not report serious crashes involving its trucking contractors.

That revelation raised serious questions about safety oversight by the USPS involving their contracted vehicles, including the troubling allegation that the Postal Service is managing truck freight operations which do not adhere to legal and commonsense safety standards.

The Postal Service has, for example, set delivery schedules requiring drivers to exceed hours of service requirements and has selected carriers with extensive records of safety violations. It looks like there is no vetting of these contractors at all.

Between December of 2020 and December of 2022, the Department of Transportation identified a frightening 466 Postal Service trucking contractors that had high rates of violations related to driving hours. In 2021 and 2022, 39 percent of trucking companies carrying U.S. mail by contract violated rules meant to prevent driver exhaustion and did so repeatedly. Between 2017 and 2022, one single trucking group contracted by USPS had broken those rules 200 times-plus.

When I asked the Postal Service for the number of deaths involved in the contracted transport of mail, the Postal Service said that they didn't have that information because they did not collect, monitor, or report such information.

Imagine that comfort to grieving families.

That was until, of course, May of 2023 when I asked the Inspector General of the U.S. Postal Service to look into this issue and, all of a sudden, the Postal Service responded by establishing an ad hoc centralized reporting mechanism for serious and deadly crashes involving postal freight contractors.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD the "Contract Trucking Safety and Compliance Report."

FINDINGS SUMMARY

We found that the Postal Service's highway trucking contract safety controls, contract compliance, and screening oversight were not always effective. First, the Postal Service did not track contractor accidents and fatalities. Second, the Postal Service did not always develop appropriate safety requirements, provide adequate oversight, or enforce the terms and conditions of the contracts or freight auction Ordering Agreements.

Lastly, the Postal Service's screening processes did not always include a contract trucker's driving history. These collective deficiencies hindered visibility into safety performance and could compromise the safety and security of the mail and motorists.

FINDING #1: THE POSTAL SERVICE DOES NOT TRACK TRUCKING ACCIDENTS AND FATALITIES BY CONTRACTORS

The Postal Service did not track trucking contractor accidents and fatalities and therefore, we could not determine the total number of occurrences. We analyzed incident data between October 2018 and December 2022 tracked on the DOT's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) website to help assess Postal Service contract trucker safety performance. This list does not contain all contractors utilized by the Postal Service as FMCSA does not track company safety data separately. However, we were able to identify at least 373 accidents resulting in 89 fatalities that were directly related to 43 on-duty contractors servicing Postal Service truck contracts. These 43 contractors were associated with Postal Service contracts totaling about \$1.34 billion between October 2018 and December 2022. We determined that the Postal Service had not terminated any contracts with trucking companies involved in accidents or fatalities prior to March 2023.

The Postal Service was unable to provide statistics and information on incidents (e.g., frequency, location, time, or involved parties) as it did not monitor FMCSA or have a system for recording or tracking related contractor data. However, when accidents or fatalities occur on trucking routes contracted with the Postal Service, contractors are required to report incident data to Postal Service contracting personnel. As stated earlier, Postal Service policy also requires AOs to report accident information to the Postal Inspection Service. Despite these reporting requirements, there is no centralized collection of information concerning these incidents. Postal Service officials acknowledged the lack of such a system, noting that tracking this data was not previously required by Postal Service policy or procedures.

The Postal Service has recently started to track this information. In March 2023, the Vice President, Transportation Strategy, stated that all traffic accidents involving contract trucking drivers be reported directly to him and the appropriate CO. This directive, however, was not recorded in written policy. In June 2023, the Postal Service stated they have an existing platform that could be used for storing contract trucking safety data. However, as of November 2023, the Postal Service has not created corresponding policies governing the use of this system (including related roles, responsibilities, and procedures) to record contract trucking safety data.

The Postal Service is however, taking other actions to monitor, assess, and potentially act on contractor safety data. First, it hired outside experts to review changes in the suppliers' safety ratings, create a list of suppliers to avoid, and determine suppliers' insurance coverage risk. Second, it is working to establish new contract trucking proc-

esses and procedures to improve the quality of contractors, including the removal of contractors with a conditional safety rating. Collectively, these actions would better inform the Postal Service when making decisions to either (a) choose a contractor based on their safety performance or (b) take appropriate termination or other corrective actions in instances of poor safety performance.

However even with these actions, the lack of a finalized method and established policies to track and monitor contractor accident and fatality data in the existing safety database limits the Postal Service's visibility into contractor safety performance. This deficiency could allow unsafe drivers to transport mail and put other motorists at risk.

Recommendation #1:

We recommend the Vice President, Transportation Strategy, finalize the method for tracking contractor accident and fatality data and establish corresponding written policies and procedures, including related roles and responsibilities.

FINDING #2: LACK OF SUBCONTRACTOR AND TEAM DRIVER OVERSIGHT

The Postal Service lacked requirements and clear policies or did not always enforce the terms and conditions of the contracts or freight auction Ordering Agreements to promote safe highway trucking practices. We found the following deficiencies:

Lack of Visibility in Subcontractor Use. The Postal Service did not always know who was authorized to transport the mail on its behalf. Freight auction brokers were not required to obtain prior written approval or inform the Postal Service of the specific contractors being utilized. Instead, the Postal Service relied on the broker to complete subcontractor authorization and vet the subcontractor, but those results are not required to be reported to the Postal Service. The onus is on the broker to ensure the subcontractor is in compliance with Postal Service policies.

Specific to HCR contracts, per the procurement handbook, contractors should specify their intent to subcontract route operations during contract award and disclose any subsequent subcontractor additions. Further, if a contractor wants to use additional subcontractors, Postal Service policy states this is an exceptional action and should be approved only when the contractor can offer sufficient reasons for the change. HCR contract terms and conditions also require the contractor to fully disclose subcontractor relationships as part of its proposal.

However, of the 15 COs and AOs interviewed, 14 (93 percent) did not know when HeR contractors utilized a subcontractor. Furthermore, HCR contractors must obtain prior written approval from the CO to employ subcontractors. However, six of the seven COs we interviewed were not aware of this requirement and therefore did not have the required documentation. Instead, the Postal Service relied on the HCR contractor to determine when to use a subcontractor and to ensure the subcontractor adhered to the terms and conditions including safety requirements. Using subcontractors without the prior written approval of the CO is a major irregularity for which the contractor may be terminated without notice or warning. However, while the SPs and Ps require approval from the CO before subcontracting, it does not state that approval needs to be written.

Mr. CONNOLLY. As the USPS OIG stated in a report released this past March, while it is a welcome step, the Postal Service still does not have a single written policy requiring the tracking of trucking contractor accidents and fatalities.

The OIG's number one recommendation was that the Postal Service fix this serious safety oversight immediately, and that is what we are doing today.

Our legislation would codify the number one recommendation of the OIG, to begin to improve USPS freight trucking safety and provide accountability.

This bill will maintain an internal database, and I hope it will lead to reforms by the Postal Service and save lives.

□ 1645

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for the purposes of a colloquy.

Mr. CONNOLLY, is it the case that rules that would clearly apply to USPS trucks carrying postal mail have not been applied to the contractors?

Mr. CONNOLLY. I think that is a fair conclusion.

Mr. RASKIN. In other words, the postal truck drivers who are working for the Postal Service have to have all the proper licensure and all the proper certification and training. Presumably the brakes are checked on their trucks, but because of the contracting out, they somehow have been able to escape all the rules we have with respect to road safety?

Mr. CONNOLLY. I think, again, that is a fair conclusion, Mr. RASKIN.

Mr. RASKIN. Well, again, I commend the gentleman for bringing this to public attention. That is an extraordinary number of people to lose their lives on the road to private contractors, who seem to have completely escaped the grasp of the rules that have been adopted under the Postal Service. Additionally, we know that the Postal Service traditionally has taken far more serious interest in public safety and public welfare.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I say to Mr. RASKIN, what is so troubling is these are 100 percent preventable tragedies. Not one of these lives had to be lost but for the callousness and lack of regard at the Postal Service in vetting freight contractors.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is excellent bipartisan legislation with Congress acting just as it should to address a serious public policy problem, and let's hope that we pass this quickly, the President signs it quickly, and we don't lose any more Americans or Postal Service workers on the road.

Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone to support it, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, the Postal Service is tasked with the challenging job of providing fast, reliable mail service nationwide. While they do so, their safety should be prioritized.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this common-

sense bill that increases transparency into the Postal Service's safety record to improve public safety throughout our Nation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HIGGINS of Louisiana). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. LATURNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7527, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GRANT ACCESSIBILITY ACT

Mr. LATURNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7525) to require the Director of the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance to agencies requiring special districts to be recognized as local government for the purpose of Federal financial assistance determinations.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7525

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 "Special District Grant Accessibility Act".

SEC. 2. AGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GUIDANCE ON SPECIAL DISTRICTS.

(a) REQUIREMENTS FOR AGENCY ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SPECIAL DISTRICTS AS GRANT RECIPIENTS.—

(1) OMB GUIDANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall issue guidance that clarifies how an agency recognizes a special district as a unit of local government for the purpose of being eligible to receive Federal financial assistance.

(2) AGENCY REQUIREMENTS.—Not later than 1 year after the date on which the guidance is issued pursuant to paragraph (1), the head of each agency shall implement the requirements of such guidance and conform any policy, principle, practice, procedure, or guideline relating to the administration of the Federal financial assistance programs of the agency.

(3) REPORTING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Accountability of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report that evaluates agency implementation of and conformity to the guidance issued pursuant to paragraph (1).

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AGENCY.—The term "agency" has the meaning given the term in section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) DIRECTOR.—The term "Director" means the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

(3) FEDERAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.—The term "Federal financial assistance"—

(A) means assistance that a non-Federal entity receives or administers in the form of a grant, loan, loan guarantee, property, co-

operative agreement, interest subsidy, insurance, food commodity, direct appropriation, or other assistance; and

(B) does not include an amount received as reimbursement for services rendered to an individual in accordance with guidance issued by the Director.

(4) SPECIAL DISTRICT.—The term "special district" means a political subdivision of a State, with specified boundaries and significant budgetary autonomy or control, created by or pursuant to the laws of the State, for the purpose of performing limited and specific governmental or proprietary functions that distinguish it as a significantly separate entity from the administrative governance structure of any other form of local government unit within a State.

(5) STATE.—The term "State" means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, each commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States, and each federally recognized Indian Tribe.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATURNER. 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 this measure.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7525, which establishes a definition in law for special districts and clarifies that special districts are eligible to receive Federal financial assistance.

Many Americans receive essential services through special districts, units of local government authorized under State law to deliver specific services to communities. There are approximately 35,000 special districts across the country in every single State.

Some examples of special districts are ambulance service districts, drainage districts, emergency service boards, and flood control districts, to name a few. These special districts provide critical services to mostly rural communities across the Nation.

The Office of Management and Budget already recognizes special districts as units of local government, similar to townships or villages, yet special districts often struggle to compete for or access Federal funding.

The Special District Grant Accessibility Act works to solve this problem and ensures that special districts are on equal footing with other units of local government. This bill requires the Office of Management and Budget to issue guidance to Federal agencies, emphasizing how special districts should be recognized as a unit of local government.

This legislation is supported by the National Special Districts Coalition.