

This bipartisan bill is a commonsense step. It is good for people. It is good for small businesses.

Madam Speaker, I thank Congressman MOLINARO, once again, for his leadership, and I urge the House to pass the bill today.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 44.1 million Americans are individuals with disabilities. It is important to ensure that all Americans are included and accommodated in the workplace and business community. However, only 26 percent of people with disabilities participate in America's labor force.

One such way to improve these numbers is through entrepreneurship. There are about 1.8 million small businesses owned by people with disabilities in the U.S. Owning a small business is a major pathway for all Americans, especially people with disabilities, to achieve self-sufficiency.

Today's legislation would require the SBA to enter an MOU with the National Council on Disability to promote entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. MOLINARO and Mr. PAPPAS for their collaboration, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, from the start of this Congress, Representative MOLINARO has been a strong advocate for individuals with disabilities. I am thankful for his efforts in the Committee on Small Business to continue his work to ensure Federal resources are being used as effectively as possible so every entrepreneur has a chance to succeed.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7989.

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.

RURAL SMALL BUSINESS RESILIENCE ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7984) to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to improve access to disaster assistance for individuals located in rural areas, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7984

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 "Rural Small Business Resilience Act".

SEC. 2. ACCESS TO DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS LOCATED IN RURAL AREAS.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall ensure that the Associate Administrator of the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience of the Administration takes such actions as necessary to ensure that individuals located in rural areas (as defined in paragraph (16) of section 7(b) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)(16))) for which a disaster declaration has been made under such section 7(b) have full access to assistance provided under such section, including by providing targeted outreach and marketing materials to such individuals.

SEC. 3. TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.

The second paragraph (16) (relating to statute of limitations) of section 7(b) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 636(b)) is redesignated as paragraph (17).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 7984, the Rural Small Business Resilience Act. This legislation would require the SBA to meet communities immediately following a disaster.

It is no secret that Americans in rural communities face different challenges following a disaster than their urban counterparts. It makes sense, then, that a one-size-fits-all outreach plan from the SBA is inadequate.

The GAO confirmed this in their February report, stating individuals in rural areas do not even know assistance is available from the SBA as they try to get back on their feet following a disaster.

The SBA's disaster loan program offers loans to help homeowners, renters, businesses, and nonprofits recover from physical and economic losses following a declared disaster.

I am grateful to Representative PAPPAS and Representative BEAN for introducing this legislation so that rural Americans will have full access to these resources when disaster strikes.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, today we are considering H.R. 7984, which will require the SBA to close out the GAO recommendation, ensuring that individuals in rural areas where a disaster declaration has been made have full access to assistance, including targeted outreach and marketing materials. The SBA will have 1 year to close out the recommendation.

On February 22, 2024, the GAO issued a report examining how the SBA's disaster loan program assists communities after disasters, disaster loan trends in rural and urban areas for fiscal years 2017 to 2022, challenges rural communities face after disasters, and the SBA's actions that address challenges.

The GAO found that rural areas have characteristics that make recovery difficult, and they face challenges in seeking SBA disaster assistance. While the SBA has taken steps to address challenges to recovery, including portable outreach centers, virtual outreach, and a whole-of-SBA approach, this bill prioritizes the SBA's efforts to close out this GAO recommendation and focus on our Nation's rural communities.

Madam Speaker, I commend Mr. PAPPAS and Mr. BEAN for their work on this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BEAN).

Mr. BEAN of Florida. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, summer is right around the corner, and you know what that means: ice cream, going to the pool, going to the beach, baseball, and, unfortunately, hurricane season.

We all know that in baseball, you get three strikes and you are out, but for some small business owners, they could be out with just one major disaster strike.

According to FEMA, 43 percent of small businesses never reopen after a major disaster. An additional 29 percent go out of business within 2 years of the disaster.

That is why, today, I rise in support of H.R. 7984, the Rural Small Business Resilience Act, which I am proud to co-lead along with Representative PAPPAS from the great State of New Hampshire.

This legislation will require the SBA to appropriately tailor marketing and outreach materials to rural communities following a disaster.

In a recent report, the Government Accountability Office, the GAO, found that small businesses in rural communities are not aware of the vital assistance the SBA can provide following a disaster, which could make or break whether they remain open or closed.

The GAO recommends the SBA distinguish their marketing between rural

and urban areas in their outreach and how they get the word out that they are there to help them.

Thankfully, Representative PAPPAS and I have heard the message from GAO. It is loud and clear. We have the right answer, and it is the answer small businesses may be looking for. That answer, Madam Speaker, is the Rural Small Business Resilience Act.

I ask my colleagues to support small business and support small business owners by voting “yes” today on H.R. 7984. It could very well be a game changer for small business.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. PAPPAS), the sponsor of the legislation.

Mr. PAPPAS. Madam Speaker, I thank the ranking member and Chairman WILLIAMS for bringing this piece of legislation to the floor.

I rise in support of bipartisan legislation that works to support our rural small businesses and entrepreneurs. In my State of New Hampshire, small businesses are our big business, and we must advance legislation that meets their needs and supports the economies of our local communities.

I introduced this bill alongside Representative BEAN, as well as Representatives GOLDEN and MANN, and I am grateful for their leadership on this issue.

This bipartisan bill would require the SBA to develop specific outreach policies and procedures for rural communities and ensure that rural small businesses have full access to SBA disaster assistance.

It would specifically tailor outreach and marketing plans for the SBA’s disaster loan program to address challenges rural communities face in accessing disaster relief. Rural small businesses face unique challenges, and we must ensure that we are taking every step possible to see that they have access to the full spectrum of resources and support, especially with regard to disaster preparedness and relief.

As we continue to see extreme weather events impacting our communities, this legislation couldn’t be more important.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill on the floor today.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, as witnessed over recent years, the number and cost of weather and climate disasters, such as tornadoes and wildfires, have been increasing across the United States.

Approximately 20 percent of the U.S. population lives in rural areas, representing 97 percent of land area, according to the 2020 Census. GAO has recommended the SBA distinguish between rural and urban communities in its outreach and marketing to disaster areas. Such targeted outreach and marketing to rural communities can make a significant difference.

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I thank Mr. PAPPAS and Mr. BEAN for putting crazy town partisan antics aside and coming together to craft a bill that truly makes a difference for rural America.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, national disasters are devastating, and it is important that Americans understand what resources are available regardless of where they live.

I, once again, thank Representatives PAPPAS and BEAN for their work on this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support it, 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. 7984.

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.

TRANSPARENCY AND PREDICTABILITY IN SMALL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8014) to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to issue rules for cancelled covered solicitations, to amend the Small Business Act to provide assistance to small business concerns relating to certain cancelled solicitations, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8014

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 “Transparency and Predictability in Small Business Opportunities Act”.

SEC. 2. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION RULES FOR CANCELLED COVERED SOLICITATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration shall issue rules to carry out the following actions:

(1) Disclose information about a covered solicitation that was issued and cancelled that includes the following:

(A) A justification for the cancellation of such covered solicitation.

(B) Available information about any plans to reissue such covered solicitation and any associated timeframes for such reissuance.

(C) Available information about any plans to include the requirements such covered solicitation in another contract or task order of the Federal agency.

(2) With respect to a cancelled covered solicitation which the Federal agency does not intend to reissue, procedures for the referral

of a small business concern that prepared a bid for such covered solicitation to the Director of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (as defined in section 15(k) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 644(k))) of the Federal agency for assistance in identifying similar contracting opportunities.

(b) PUBLICATION.—The information required under subsection (a) shall be made publicly accessible on the single governmentwide point of entry described under section 1708 of title 41, United States Code.

(c) COVERED SOLICITATION DEFINED.—The term “covered solicitation” means a solicitation of a Federal agency for a procurement for which two or more small business concerns were eligible to submit a bid.

SEC. 3. DUTIES FOR DIRECTORS OF OFFICES OF SMALL AND DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS UTILIZATION RELATING TO CERTAIN CANCELLED SOLICITATIONS.

Section 15(k) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 644(k)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (21), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

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

“(22) shall, when notified by a small business concern that a Federal agency cancelled a solicitation for which such concern prepared a bid and such Federal agency does not intend to reissue, assist such concern with identifying similar contracting opportunities.”.

SEC. 4. COMPLIANCE WITH CUTGO.

No additional amounts are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act or the amendments made by this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. WILLIAMS) and the gentleman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 8014, the Transparency and Predictability in Small Business Opportunities Act sponsored by Representatives MFUME and ALFORD.

H.R. 8014 seeks to bring clarity to small business owners when an agency cancels a contract solicitation. Small businesses spend an incredible amount of time and resources preparing to bid on government contracts. When an agency cancels a contract solicitation, the small businesses that started preparing are left with nothing to show for their work. Furthermore, there is little clarity about what the agency will do with the products and services it originally intended to purchase.

H.R. 8014 will require agencies to share with the SBA its future plans with the canceled solicitation and a