

real solutions to combat our Nation's housing and homelessness crisis, including the Housing Crisis Response Act, the Ending Homelessness Act, and the Downpayment Toward Equity Act offered by Ranking Member MAXINE WATERS earlier this Congress.

This comprehensive package of bills would help spur the development of over a million affordable homes to help bring down rents, curb rising homelessness, and revive the dream of homeownership for all.

These are the types of solutions our constituents are calling on us to advance as they continue to face the crushing blow of housing inflation.

Mr. Speaker, I also note that I recently introduced the Keep Housing Affordable Act, which would bolster the low-income housing tax credit to incentivize developers to maintain the affordability of housing units for extended periods and boost the supply of affordable housing. Mr. Speaker, the high cost of housing is one of the main issues for my constituents in North Carolina.

Mr. Speaker, we were supposed to be considering another bill on the floor today, H.R. 7462, the Wildfire Insurance Coverage Study Act of 2024, sponsored by Ranking Member WATERS. This bill is a commonsense measure to direct the Government Accountability Office to study the reasons why insurance companies are exiting States and refusing to provide insurance against wildfire perils.

This bill passed the committee by a broad bipartisan vote of 47-2, but unfortunately, Republican leadership pulled the vote. The majority didn't think Congress should understand why folks are losing their insurance coverage or what we can do about it.

Over the last week, communities across the country have been experiencing record heat waves as wildfires continue to ravage communities from California to Texas, Hawaii, Oklahoma, and Virginia. I hope the Speaker will quickly reconsider this ill-advised decision to pull the bill so we can bring the bill to the floor. Again, it passed 47-2 out of committee.

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

Mr. NUNN of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. NICKEL) for his comments. I associate myself with many of his remarks and recognize there is a great opportunity to continue to work forward in a bipartisan way to help address particularly the rural housing shortage across America.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. DE LA CRUZ).

Ms. DE LA CRUZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUNN) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge the passage of my bill, H.R. 7280, the HUD Transparency Act of 2024. I thank the bipartisan cosponsors of this commonsense legislation aimed at enhancing

the oversight and efficiency of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Mr. Speaker, for too long now, Congress has been without a formal oversight mechanism for HUD. Specific to the HUD inspector general, prior to the 118th Congress, it had been nearly 5 years since an official from HUD OIG testified.

H.R. 7280 provides long-overdue, consistent oversight by mandating the inspector general of HUD testify annually before Congress.

Given the magnitude of Federal dollars allocated to HUD, we know the housing affordability discussion cannot be had effectively without HUD's commitment to being responsible stewards of our tax dollars.

This is not a partisan issue. It is about ensuring that those who need HUD benefits can receive them. This legislation will enable the inspector general to provide essential insights and recommendations to Congress, facilitating informed decisionmaking and timely adjustments to HUD's programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the passage of the HUD Transparency Act.

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

Mr. Speaker, I support this bipartisan bill but also remind my Republican colleagues that we must come together to advance real solutions to the worsening housing and homelessness crisis.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I recognize the incredible work of the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. DE LA CRUZ). In only her freshman year, she is already standing on the front line of taking care of not only her constituents but recognizing this threat across the country, the challenges it poses, and offering a real solution that has earned overwhelmingly bipartisan support from the House Financial Services Committee and the team there.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues on the House floor today to support H.R. 7280, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. NUNN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 7280, 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.

VICTIMS' VOICES OUTSIDE AND INSIDE THE COURTROOM EFFECTIVENESS ACT

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill

(S. 3706) to amend section 3663A of title 18, United States Code, to clarify that restitution includes necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by a person who has assumed the victim's rights.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3706

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 "Victims' Voices Outside and Inside the Courtroom Effectiveness Act" or the "Victims' VOICES Act".

SEC. 2. RESTITUTION FOR EXPENSES OF PERSONS WHO HAVE ASSUMED THE VICTIM'S RIGHTS.

Section 3663A(a) of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(4) CLARIFICATION.—In ordering restitution under this section, a court shall order the defendant to make restitution to a person who has assumed the victim's rights under paragraph (2) to reimburse that person's necessary and reasonable—

"(A) lost income, child care, transportation, and other expenses incurred during and directly related to participation in the investigation or prosecution of the offense or attendance at proceedings related to the offense;

"(B) lost income, transportation, and other expenses incurred that are directly related to transporting the victim for necessary medical and related professional services and devices relating to physical, psychiatric, and psychological care, including nonmedical care and treatment rendered in accordance with a method of healing recognized by the law of the place of treatment; and

"(C) lost income, transportation, and other expenses incurred that are directly related to transporting the victim to receive necessary physical and occupational therapy and rehabilitation."

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

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Wyoming.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. HAGEMAN. 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 S. 3706.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Wyoming?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, the bill we are here today to pass brings much-needed support to crime victims across the country. The bipartisan and bicameral Victims' Voices Outside and Inside the Courtroom Effectiveness Act, or Victims' VOICES Act, passed the Senate through unanimous consent. I am proud to be the House lead on this important legislation.

□ 1645

I thank my friend and colleague across the aisle, Representative LUCY MCBATH, for her work on this legislation and for her continued advocacy on behalf of victims.

I will also take a moment to remember and acknowledge Ms. JACKSON LEE. She was a cosponsor of the bill and a longtime advocate for the rights of crime victims. My thoughts and prayers go out to her family.

The purpose of the Victims' VOICES Act is simple: It assures fairness for all crime victims in accessing and receiving restitution from convicted defendants.

Supporting victims and holding criminals accountable has always been a top priority of Congress. In 1996, the Mandatory Victims Restitution Act was signed into law and required defendants convicted of certain crimes, including violent crime, to pay restitution to their victims.

These types of restitution can include lost income, childcare costs incurred while participating in the investigation, or medical and nonmedical care and treatment. In cases where a victim is a minor, deceased, or unable to act on their own behalf, a family member, legal guardian, or a person appointed by the court may assume the victim's rights.

However, many jurisdictions have wrongfully ruled these individuals are precluded from receiving restitution for their own lost income or expenses.

Parents, who lovingly cared for their child who was the victim of a crime, may not receive compensation for taking time off of work to help their child heal. Family members whose loved ones did not survive a brutal attack may not receive restitution.

This is wrong. We should be thanking these brave and thoughtful citizens. Instead, the government is casting them aside.

This is an especially concerning issue in crimes of violence and in Tribal communities, like my district, where locating and protecting missing and exploited women and children is a major challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the passage of this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, S. 3706, the Victims' Voices Outside and Inside the Courtroom Effectiveness Act, or the Victims' VOICES Act, is bipartisan legislation that would amend the Mandatory Victims Restitution Act to make certain family members, friends, legal guardians, and others eligible to receive repayment for expenses incurred as a result of helping victims of crime seek justice and restorative care.

While the intention of the MVRA is to ensure that victims of violent crime, crimes against property, and other crimes are compensated by defendants for their losses, the limitations placed on who may receive restitution can create unfair consequences for those who have provided much-needed support to victims.

That is why it has become necessary for Congress to consider the broader impact of the diverse judicial interpre-

tations of the MVRA on those individuals who play a vital role in helping victims recover and heal.

Victims of crime often experience a range of emotional, physical, and psychological challenges that can make it difficult to navigate the complex, legal, and therapeutic processes involved in pursuing justice and healing.

In the wake of these crimes, particularly violent crimes, support from family members, friends, legal guardians, and others is crucial for victims not only to actively participate in the investigation and prosecution of their cases, but to receive the medical care, psychological treatment, and other support services that they so desperately need.

These exceptional people play a critical role in providing comfort and assistance to victims of crime, which requires significant time and effort. Oftentimes, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, guardians, and best friends take on the daunting responsibility of transporting their loved ones over several weeks and months or sometimes even years to meet with investigators and prosecutors or to receive treatment, therapy, or other services.

They sit through monthslong trials, sentencing hearings, and other court proceedings alongside their traumatized loved ones, providing support and encouragement while spending countless hours away from their jobs, needing additional childcare, and spending huge amounts of money on travel.

Unfortunately, several jurisdictions have refused to allow repayment of the money spent or not earned by family members and others who they have determined do not meet the MVRA's definition of "victim."

Despite recognizing the good policy reasons for allowing a court to order reimbursement to a victim's representative for such expenditures, the Sixth, Eighth, and Tenth Circuits, as well as many lower courts, have held that the language of the MVRA limits restitution to losses incurred only by victims and not by those who help them. We must not allow this injustice to persist.

It is, therefore, necessary that Congress makes clear that family members and others should receive compensation for the costs they have incurred as a result of aiding victims of crime as they traverse the lengthy and often overwhelming path to justice.

This legislation would satisfy this objective by clarifying that restitution should be made to family members and others in the same manner as victims for lost income, childcare, transportation, and other expenses incurred to participate in an investigation or prosecution, attend proceedings, or transport the victim for medical care, treatment, or therapy.

By ensuring that courts are authorized to order restitution in this manner, this legislation would encourage the provision of support to victims and ensure perpetrators of crime are made

to pay for all of the losses they cause while advancing fairness, accountability, and justice.

I commend the sponsor of the House version of this bill, Ms. HAGEMAN, along with her bipartisan lead Cosponsors, Representatives LUCY MCBATH, HANK JOHNSON, and NATHANIEL MORAN for their efforts, along with the Senate sponsors of this bill.

I encourage my colleagues to join me and a broad coalition of victims' advocacy groups and law enforcement in support of this thoughtful, bipartisan legislation.

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

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, those families and the victims of crime should not be discriminated against. Our men and women in blue agree. This legislation is endorsed and supported by law enforcement organizations and victims' rights groups, including the National District Attorneys Association, RAVEN, National Children's Alliance, Major County Sheriffs of America, RAINN, and the National Native American Law Enforcement Association.

Let's work together by lightening the burden for victims and their families and making it easier to finally access justice.

Again, I thank Representative MCBATH for co-leading this bill with me in the House and I thank Senator CORNYN for his leadership on this important effort in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on S. 3706, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, family members, legal guardians, and others work closely with victims of crime as they work to resolve the trauma of their victimization and the offenses committed against them. Having a strong support system can help victims feel empowered and less isolated in their experiences, which can ultimately strengthen their resolve to participate in the investigation and prosecution of the crime, and to seek treatment for injuries seen and unseen.

S. 3706, the Victims' VOICES Act would authorize courts to order defendants to pay restitution not only to victims of crime for their losses, but also to others for the costs they incur as they stand with victims in the pursuit of justice. I support this bipartisan legislation and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

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

Ms. HAGEMAN. Mr. Speaker, the victims and their families should receive full restitution when they are the victims of crimes. It is for that reason that I have supported and am sponsoring S. 3706, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Wyoming (Ms.

HAGEMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 3706.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Ms. HAGEMAN. 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.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO OUR COURTS ACT

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 227) to amend title 28, United States Code, to provide an additional place for holding court for the Pecos Division of the Western District of Texas, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 227

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 “Improving Access to Our Courts Act”.

SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL PLACES FOR HOLDING COURT.

(a) PECOS DIVISION OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS.—Section 124(d)(6) of title 28, United States Code, is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (7), by inserting “and Alpine” after “Pecos”.

(b) WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON.—Section 128(b) of title 28, United States Code, is amended by inserting “Mount Vernon,” after “Tacoma.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on S. 227.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, Americans depend on the Federal court system to protect their rights and obtain relief when their rights are violated. It is also where criminals are prosecuted, highlighting the importance of making our communities safer. That is why improving and ensuring accessibility to courts for our citizens is so important.

This important bill adds four courts to the United States Code to save thousands of Americans in Texas and Washington from having to make long, burdensome trips just to reach the nearest Federal courthouse.

The bill authorizes Federal courts in the Western District of Texas and

Western District of Washington to hold court in Alpine, Texas, and Mount Vernon, Washington, respectively.

Both Alpine and Mount Vernon already have existing facilities necessary to hold court, so the cost of the bill is little or nothing. By authorizing these districts to utilize their locations already built, we will reduce the administrative burdens on the court system and logistic burdens on which businesses count.

For example, the Judicial Conference of the United States has noted that Americans in the Western District of Texas must drive as far as 100 miles to reach the courthouse in Pecos, Texas.

The Judicial Conference identified a similar hardship for Americans in the Western District of Washington. That is why I support this commonsense, bipartisan legislation and urge both sides of the aisle to do the same.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Improving Access to Our Courts Act would amend title 28 of the United States Code to provide an additional place for holding court in the Western District of Texas and in the Western District of Washington.

These additional courthouses are needed to better serve the 12.2 million people who call these two districts home.

Both districts are comprised of wide areas of land. The Western District of Washington takes up half of Washington State and the Western District of Texas covers the western 68 counties of the State, which is over 92,000 square miles and is so large that it is in two separate time zones.

Consequently, the citizens of these two districts often need to travel for hours to access the courthouse doors. On paper, our basic rights do not change depending on where we live, yet in practice that is exactly what is happening.

It makes no sense that just because someone lives in a more rural, expansive district, they should incur dramatically increased travel time and administrative costs to seek justice. Adding courthouses is a small step in the right direction toward making the judicial system accessible to all Americans no matter where they live.

The Judicial Conference has recommended the addition of these two courthouses, a recommendation that grew even more urgent after the Western District of Washington's Beltingham facility had part of its roof collapse.

□ 1700

This country cannot have a flourishing justice system when its buildings are falling apart, its staff are underpaid, and there is a perpetual shortage of judges to fairly administer the laws.

This bill will not fix all of these problems, but it will take a small step to

help millions of Americans gain equal access to justice, and I think it is a step worth taking.

We previously passed the House version of this legislation, and I look forward to once again voting in favor of this important legislation, this time to send it to President Biden's desk.

Finally, I thank Representatives TONY GONZALES, RICK LARSEN, and SUZAN DELBENE in the House and Senators CORNYN, MURRAY, CRUZ, and CANTWELL in the Senate for working on a bipartisan basis to introduce this legislation to improve the lives of the residents of Texas and Washington.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation makes a modest but important change to help improve access to justice for millions of Americans. I thank the sponsors, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleague from New York in urging that this bipartisan bill be passed.

Mr. Speaker, I will close simply by saying it is seldom that people come before this body saying: I have something that will cost the government little or nothing but will save Americans a great deal.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WEBER of Texas). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 227.

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. ISSA. 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.

FOREIGN EXTORTION PREVENTION TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 4548) to make a technical correction to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 by repealing section 5101 and enacting an updated version of the Foreign Extortion Prevention Act.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 4548

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 “Foreign Extortion Prevention Technical Corrections Act”.

SEC. 2. TECHNICAL CORRECTION TO 2024 NDAA.

(a) REPEAL OF PREVIOUS VERSION OF FEPA.—Section 5101 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024 (Public Law 118-31) is repealed, and each provision of law amended by that section is