

great pride to stand before you and to join Representative FITZPATRICK and my colleagues in honoring the woman who advanced the sport and achieved equal prize money for herself and all the women who followed.

Mr. Speaker, while Congress has awarded a Congressional Gold Medal to prolific male athletes in the past, this body has never awarded a female athlete the highest civilian honor.

Today, we seek to change that and award it to the one woman who advocated, fought, and blazed the trail for equality in sports and won 129 singles titles and 39 Grand Slam titles along the way, Billie Jean King.

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

Mr. Speaker, this important bill will award a Congressional Gold Medal to Billie Jean King in recognition of her remarkable work devoted to championing women's rights in sports and in society. She used her platform to fight for equal rights and opportunities for equality in sports and society.

I am very thankful to Senator GILLIBRAND for her work on this important bill. I cannot help but share with you today, Billie Jean King helped to inspire and also helped to ensure equal opportunities for future tennis players.

Coming from my district, where they were reared and trained to be the champions that they became, Venus and Serena Williams are beneficiaries of all of that work that Billie Jean King did to change the way prize money was equalized and to make sure that women in tennis and women in all aspects of our society have equal opportunities. I thank Billie Jean King.

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

Mrs. KIM of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all my colleagues who spoke in support of this legislation. I believe this was a wonderful time where we got to understand much more than what we knew from the news articles about Billie Jean and her accomplishments, and her legacy will continue on. She will continue to be an inspiration to all of us, especially to girls and women and future athletes.

I urge my colleagues to support S. 2861, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. KIM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2861.

The question was taken.

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

Mrs. KIM of California. 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.

□ 1500

# BUILDING ON REEMPLOYMENT IMPROVEMENTS TO DELIVER GOOD EMPLOYMENT FOR WORKERS ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5861) to extend reemployment services and eligibility assessments to all claimants for unemployment benefits, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5861

*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 "Building on Reemployment Improvements to Deliver Good Employment for Workers Act" or the "BRIDGE for Workers Act".*

## SEC. 2. ELIGIBILITY FOR REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—Section 306(a) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 506(a)) is amended—

(1) by striking "individuals referred to reemployment services as described in section 303(j)" and inserting "claimants for regular compensation, including claimants referred to reemployment services as described in section 303(j)."; and

(2) by striking "such individuals" and inserting "such claimants".

(b) *EFFECTIVE DATE.*—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

## GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the BRIDGE for Workers Act to help more Americans who are out of work find employment faster.

Currently, only those deemed most likely to exhaust their unemployment benefits are eligible for job placement services provided through the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments program. That unfairly limits its resources to a small subset of UI recipients, when thousands of others could be back in the workforce sooner with this assistance. This bill levels the playing field and extends these services to every American on unemployment benefits.

These services are critical for helping Americans find work compatible with their experience and skills to help

them get back to earning a paycheck again.

Members of Congress have heard over and over again about a labor shortage and "help wanted" signs dotting storefronts across the country. This legislation will help address this shortage by helping more unemployed Americans get back into the workforce sooner.

After fraudsters and criminals stole over \$100 billion of unemployment benefits during COVID, the bill before us will also strengthen program integrity by ensuring claimants are complying with eligibility rules. Claimants must be able to work, available to work, and actively seeking work.

This legislation was a bipartisan effort sponsored by the chairman and ranking member of the Ways and Means Work and Welfare Subcommittee, Representatives LaHood and Davis. I thank them both for their leadership in helping the unemployment insurance program fulfill its mission of supporting unemployed Americans who are seeking stable work.

The BRIDGE for Workers Act passed out of committee with every single Republican and Democrat voting for it. I hope we can have a repeat performance of strong bipartisan support in favor of this legislation today.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5861, the BRIDGE for Workers Act. I am glad to see that the House is moving forward to ensure that State reemployment service programs serve the workers who can benefit from most of them, as we intended in our original bipartisan legislation.

The Ways and Means Committee reported out this bill nearly a year ago, and I hope we can work together to finally enact it this year. As you know, this important technical clarification first passed our committee, and then the full House on an overwhelming, bipartisan vote in 2019, and Senate Republicans prevented it from becoming law.

Our economic recovery has been historically strong, both in comparison to past recessions and compared to our peer countries. The right policies in the Biden-Harris American Rescue Plan Act resulted in strong GDP growth. Americans are back at work and earning higher wages than they were before. Inflation, which was always lower than in our peer countries, appears to be leveling off.

American workers are the heart of our strong economy, and the best way to preserve and grow it is to ensure that they can get and keep good jobs while also caring for their families. Research shows one way we can help people go back to work faster is to ensure that they get simple services like job market information or resume help.

This bipartisan legislation, which I was proud to work with the gentleman

from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD) to introduce and move ahead, is key to ensuring that the right workers get these job-finding supports. Even a week or two of getting a paycheck instead of an unemployment benefit makes a difference for a household budget.

I hope this bill is just the first effort to provide commonsense help so that Americans can work and support their families. A good next step would be to enact universal paid family and medical leave and guaranteed childcare. It is an embarrassment that some continue to block enactment of these essential supports that all other developed countries provide.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with my colleagues to support workers and enact this bipartisan bill before the end of the year. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD), the chairman of our Work and Welfare Subcommittee.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman SMITH for his leadership on this bill.

I rise today in strong support of our bill, H.R. 5861, the BRIDGE for Workers Act. This bipartisan bill demonstrates our joint commitment in Congress to supporting American workers.

Unemployment insurance is meant to help people without a job get through a rough patch and find new opportunity to support themselves and their families.

Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment grants allow States to provide services to recipients of unemployment benefits who are identified as those who could return to work more quickly. These grants are used for job skills training, resume preparation, English as a second language classes, and career exploration to connect unemployed workers to in-demand jobs.

Reemployment services have been demonstrated to improve employment outcomes and reduce the number of weeks that participants receive unemployment benefits. In addition, the program strengthens program integrity by ensuring claimants are complying with eligibility rules.

The bill before us today would make a technical correction to clarify that reemployment services provided through these Federal grants can be provided to all unemployment insurance claimants, not just those most likely to exhaust their benefits, as has been interpreted by the Department of Labor.

I thank my bill's co-lead and fellow Illinoisan and friend, DANNY DAVIS, the ranking member of the Work and Welfare Subcommittee, for his work on this bill, which passed out of the Committee on Ways and Means with unanimous bipartisan support.

This legislation provides the permanent flexibility States need to make reemployment services a successful

tool for those who have lost their job through no fault of their own. This really is a bridge to help workers. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

This bipartisan legislation will help more Americans in a rough patch get back on their feet quickly and back into the workforce.

Communities across the country are currently in the middle of a multiple-year labor shortage. We know this from the companies of all sizes and in all industries that have warned what the lack of available workers is doing to their business. Some are cutting hours of operation or increasing customer wait times, while businesses forfeit opportunities to expand and grow because of the lack of labor.

This shortage makes business less productive, slows down our economy, and adds to our national debt. Ultimately, families pay the highest price when able-bodied workers can't or don't find new employment.

This bill takes steps to tackle the labor shortage by expanding needed job placement services to individuals receiving unemployment. This bipartisan bill is an easy, commonsense win for America's workers and small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to vote to advance 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 Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5861, 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.

#### TAXPAYER DATA PROTECTION ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8292) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to increase penalties for unauthorized disclosure of taxpayer information, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8292

*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 "Taxpayer Data Protection Act".*

#### SEC. 2. INCREASE IN PENALTIES FOR UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURES OF TAXPAYER INFORMATION.

*(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4), and (5) of section 7213(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 are each amended by striking "\$5,000, or imprisonment of not more than 5*

*years" and inserting "\$250,000, or imprisonment of not more than 10 years".*

*(b) DISCLOSURES OF RETURN INFORMATION OF MULTIPLE TAXPAYERS TREATED AS MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS.—Section 7213(a) of such Code is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:*

*"(6) DISCLOSURES OF RETURN INFORMATION OF MULTIPLE TAXPAYERS TREATED AS MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS.—For purposes of paragraphs (1), (2), (3), (4), and (5), a separate violation occurs with respect to each taxpayer whose return or return information is disclosed in violation of any such paragraph."*

*(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to disclosures made after the date of the enactment of this Act.*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. 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 the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

□ 1515

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favor of the Taxpayer Data Protection Act. When Americans file their taxes, they expect their personal data and tax information are confidential.

Between 2017 and 2021, Charles Littlejohn, who worked as a contractor for the IRS, stole taxpayer information, and he stole a lot of it. He gave it to The New York Times and ProPublica, who published articles containing that confidential tax information about President Trump and other notable figures. Mr. Littlejohn then destroyed evidence and obstructed law enforcement investigations.

Despite his efforts to cover up his crimes, Mr. Littlejohn admitted that he was "aware of the potential consequences" and, in fact, made his decision "with the full knowledge that [he] would likely end up in a courtroom."

Current law failed to deter Mr. Littlejohn from stealing and leaking private and sensitive taxpayer information. Moreover, the Department of Justice only charged Mr. Littlejohn with a single count of unauthorized disclosure of private tax information.

Given this lackluster charge, Republicans wrote the judge urging the court to sentence Mr. Littlejohn to the maximum sentence for the crimes he committed, particularly given the number of taxpayers impacted by his actions.

Mr. Littlejohn ultimately received the maximum sentence available, but the court was limited to the single count that the Department of Justice brought charges on.