

are going to come here in a dangerous world. The President-elect is going to create a budget, get their people in place, and rewrite the tax code. Let's not throw a potential government shutdown in front of them as well. That is more than enough to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely urge the passage of this legislation, H.R. 9747, and I urge my colleagues to support the bill. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MEUSER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 9747.

The question was taken.

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

Ms. DELAURO. 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.

CONFIRMATION OF CONGRESSIONAL OBSERVER ACCESS ACT OF 2023

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 6513) to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to confirm the requirement that States allow access to designated congressional election observers to observe the election administration procedures in congressional elections.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the Senate amendment is as follows:

Senate amendment:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE

This Act may be cited as the "Confirmation of Congressional Observer Access Act of 2024" or the "COCOA Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. ACCESS FOR CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS.

(a) ACCESS REQUIRED.—Title III of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. 21081 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by redesignating section 304 and 305 as sections 305 and 306; and

(2) by inserting after section 303 the following new section:

"SEC. 304. ACCESS FOR CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS.

"(a) FINDING OF CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY.—Congress finds that, regardless of legislative action, it has the authority to send congressional election observers to observe polling locations, any location where processing, scanning, tabulating, canvassing, recounting, auditing, or certifying voting results is occurring, or any other part of the process associated with elections for Federal office under the authorities granted under article 1, section 5, clause 1 and article 1, section 4, clause 1 of the Constitution of the United States. Procedures described herein do not establish any new authorities or procedures with respect to Congress' constitutional authority to observe congressional elections but are provided simply to permit a convenient statutory reference for existing congressional authority and activity.

"(b) REQUIRING STATES TO PROVIDE ACCESS FOR OBSERVERS.—

"(1) REQUIREMENT.—A State shall provide each individual who is acting as a designated congressional election observer for an election for Federal office with full access to clearly observe all elements of election administration procedures, including, but not limited to, access to any area in which a ballot is cast, processed, scanned, tabulated, canvassed, recounted, audited, or certified, including during pre- and post-election procedures.

"(2) RESTRICTIONS ON ACTIVITIES OF OBSERVERS.—No designated congressional election observer may handle a ballot or election equipment (whether voting or nonvoting or whether tabulating or nontabulating), advocate for any position or candidate, take any action to reduce ballot secrecy or voter privacy, take any action to interfere with the ability of a voter to cast a ballot or an election administrator to carry the administrator's duties, or otherwise interfere with the election administration process.

"(3) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall prohibit a designated congressional election observer from asking questions of an election administrator, election official, or election worker, or any other State or local official.

"(c) CONDUCT OF OBSERVERS.—

"(1) REMOVAL.—

"(A) AUTHORIZATION REMOVAL BY ELECTION OFFICIAL.—If a State or local election official has a reasonable basis to believe that a designated congressional election observer has engaged in or imminently will engage in intimidation or deceptive practices prohibited by Federal law, or in the disruption of voting, processing, scanning, tabulating, canvassing, or recounting of ballots, or the certification of results, a State or local election official may remove that observer from the area involved.

"(B) NOTICE TO COMMITTEE.—If a designated congressional election observer is removed from an area under subparagraph (A), the election official shall, within 24 hours of the observer's removal—

"(i) inform the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives; or the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, as applicable; and

"(ii) provide written notice detailing the reason or reasons the designated congressional election observer was removed.

"(2) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—For purposes of this subsection, the mere presence of a designated congressional election observer during an observation of election administration procedures, without any additional indicia supporting a reasonable basis for removal, is not a sufficient reason for removal under paragraph (1)(A).

"(3) RIGHT TO REPLACE OBSERVER.—If a designated congressional election observer is properly removed under subparagraph (1)(A), the chair or ranking minority member of the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives or the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, as appropriate, may send another designated congressional election observer as a replacement for the remaining duration of the observation of election administration procedures.

"(d) DESIGNATED CONGRESSIONAL ELECTION OBSERVER DESCRIBED.—In this section, a 'designated congressional election observer' is a House or Senate employee who is designated in writing by the chair or ranking minority member of the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives or the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, or a successor committee, to gather information with respect to an election, including in the event that the election is contested in the House of Representatives or the Senate and for other purposes permitted by article 1, section 5, clause 1 and article 1, section 4, clause 1 of the Constitution of the United States.

"(e) STATE DEFINED.—In this section 'State' means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT RELATING TO ENFORCEMENT.—Section 401 of such Act (52 U.S.C. 21111) is amended by striking "and 303" and inserting "303, and 304".

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents of such Act is amended—

(1) by redesignating the items relating to sections 304 and 305 as relating to sections 305 and 306; and

(2) by inserting after the item relating to section 303 the following:

"Sec. 304. Confirming access for congressional election observers."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. MORELLE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STEIL. 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 Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 6513.

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

There was no objection.

□ 1500

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 6513, the Confirmation of Congressional Observer Access Act, or COCOA Act.

Ensuring the fairness and accuracy of our elections is of utmost importance for me as chairman of the Committee on House Administration, which has broad oversight for our Nation's Federal elections.

The Election Observer Program is one of the key ways the committee has worked to strengthen our election administration practices.

Since 1993 there have been 110 contested election cases considered in the House. This averages to two contests per Congress.

Congressional observers collect on-the-ground factual information for Congress and my committee for these potential election contests.

During the 2020 election cycle, House election observers were deployed to Iowa's Second District to oversee the administration of the election of our now-colleague,

Representative MARIANNETTE MILLER-MEEKS. She went on to win the contested race by only six votes, and trained House election observers were instrumental in gathering the information the committee needed to seat the rightful winner.

The Constitution grants Congress the authority to "be the judge of the elections, returns, and qualifications of its own Members." It is under this constitutional authority that the House

established the nonpartisan Election Observer Program.

In the 2022 election cycle, observers were deployed to roughly 25 sites across the country. Dozens of offices have already signed up to participate in this year's program for the election that concludes in just 41 days.

With the help of our colleagues in the Senate, this election is now expanded to encompass a Senate program similar to the one we run in the House.

I am working to ensure election observers can be deployed across States as needed. At a recent committee hearing, six secretaries of State from both parties testified they would provide unimpeded access to our Election Observer Program in the upcoming election. I will continue to work to ensure every State and locality across the country will welcome our observers.

Strong election integrity increases confidence and participation in our elections, which is a good thing.

Providing a Federal statutory citation for these election observers to monitor election administration practices will achieve that goal. Elections are partisan, but the administration of our elections should never be partisan.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, first, let me thank my distinguished colleague and friend from Wisconsin, the chair of our committee, Mr. STEIL.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 6513. I am proud to say this measure is the byproduct of bipartisan and bicameral agreement.

As was noted, Article I, Section 5, Clause 1 of the Constitution grants Congress the authority to "be the judge of the elections, returns, and qualifications of its own Members."

The House of Representatives serves as the final arbiter over any contest to the seating of any Member-elect and is the ultimate authority over who may serve in the Chamber.

This measure, H.R. 6513, confirms Congress' constitutional authority to designate congressional staff to observe election administration procedures in congressional elections. This bill complements our longstanding Election Observer Program, as has been noted.

The program is conducted by the Committee on House Administration, as authorized by House rules and the Federal Contested Elections Act. The role of a congressional observer is to monitor the administration of the election, gather information, and report back to the committee.

Every 2 years, the committee's longstanding practice is to work collaboratively on a bipartisan basis to send observers. There is evidence of the committee sending observers dating back to at least the 99th Congress, 1985 to 1987.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, again, repeat that I am grateful to my colleague and chairman of the committee, Mr. STEIL, as well as another colleague who serves on our committee, Representative MIKE CAREY of Ohio, for sponsoring the bill. This addresses several concerns raised in committee with an earlier version of the text, and I thank them for working with us. I thank the staff on both sides for coming to this agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Senate amendment to H.R. 6513, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the ranking member of the Committee on House Administration, for his work on this important legislation, as well as the staffs of both the minority and the majority for coming together in a timely manner to get this across the line as well as our colleagues in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, having no further comments on the bill, I urge everyone to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. STEIL. 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 question will be postponed.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR KEY OFFICIALS IN THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION RESPONSIBLE FOR DECISION-MAKING AND EXECUTION FAILURES THROUGHOUT THE WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1486, I call up the resolution (H. Res. 1469) ensuring accountability for key officials in the Biden-Harris administration responsible for decisionmaking and execution failures throughout the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOST). Pursuant to House Resolution 1486, the resolution is considered read.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1469

Whereas, throughout the Biden-Harris administration, key White House, National Security Council, Department of State, and Department of Defense officials prioritized the politics and optics of the withdrawal from Afghanistan over the security of United States personnel and civilians on the ground and failed to plan for foreseeable contin-

gencies, causing a chaotic, precipitous withdrawal that resulted in the death of 13 servicemembers and the wounding of 45 servicemembers in the Abbey Gate terrorist attack on August 26, 2021;

Whereas, in 2020, the Trump administration negotiated a conditional plan to withdraw from Afghanistan called "The Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan", commonly known as the Doha Agreement, which required the Taliban to cease terrorist activities, renounce linkages with al Qaeda, reduce violence, establish a ceasefire, and participate in Afghan-to-Afghan negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan;

Whereas the Biden-Harris administration was determined to withdraw from Afghanistan regardless of the Doha Agreement and the costs of withdrawal;

Whereas, in 2021, under the Biden-Harris administration, Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, baselessly asserted the Taliban would honor their commitments and respect basic human rights;

Whereas, in 2021, President Biden selected National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan to conduct an interagency review of the policy of the United States toward Afghanistan, including the Taliban's compliance with the Doha Agreement;

Whereas the review process led by National Security Advisor Sullivan, Deputy National Security Advisor Jonathan Finer, and Homeland Security Advisor Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall completely disregarded the failure of the Taliban to comply with the Doha Agreement, did not seek input from key government officials, and blatantly ignored warnings from senior national security experts and allies of the United States that a complete withdrawal of troops would cause a total unraveling and collapse of the Government of Afghanistan;

Whereas President Biden, supported by Vice President Harris, issued a "go-to-zero order" without any regard for the safety of Americans and without making appropriate plans for noncombatant evacuation operations;

Whereas the Department of State's leadership responsible for the safety of embassy personnel and civilian evacuation plans included Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State Brian McKeon, and Counselor for the Department of State Derek Chollet;

Whereas, during the military withdrawal from April to July 2021, Secretary of State Blinken, Ambassador Ross Wilson, other Department of State officials, and the National Security Council willfully disregarded warnings of the Taliban's imminent takeover in Afghanistan and instead increased the footprint of Embassy Kabul rather than plan for a noncombatant evacuation operation;

Whereas, in early August 2021, as the Taliban made gains across Afghanistan, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl, and other senior officials purportedly advised that positioning United States military forces to assist with a noncombatant evacuation operation was not immediately necessary, contrary to urgent warnings from United States military personnel on the ground;

Whereas Secretary of State Blinken and his State Department did not call for a noncombatant evacuation operation until the Taliban began marching into Kabul on August 15, 2021;

Whereas Secretary of State Blinken and his State Department had not made determinations about who would be eligible for