

I invite my colleagues to join me in celebrating Green Cove Springs, Florida, its past, present, and future.

Here is to 150 more years of community spirit.

PIES OF THANKS

(Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, while many of us joined our families and friends for Thanksgiving, first responders and 911 telecommunicators reported for duty to keep our communities safe.

During our second annual Pies of Thanks, we traveled and extended Thanksgiving greetings to them in all 19 counties in North Carolina's First Congressional District on the same day.

We delivered pies to those working to show our unyielding appreciation for all of the fantastic work they do.

We must always join in demonstrating our genuine gratitude to the unsung heroes of our communities.

Thank you to our first responders and 911 telecommunicators, who are often the first responders of our first responders, across eastern North Carolina.

TRUMP REDUCES REGULATIONS

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, small businesses are vital to America. In fact, more than 99 percent of American businesses are considered small, employing nearly 62 million people across the United States. Last year, in South Carolina alone, there were 479,000 small businesses employing over 840,000 people.

To promote existing rules to protect small businesses for jobs, this week House Republicans will consider the Prove It Act.

This bill requires transparency from agencies on regulatory decisions and empowers small businesses to petition the Small Business Administration to review proposed regulations. To actually promote decentralized democracy, President Trump, in his first term, deleted eight regulations for any new regulation, with real power to the people.

President-elect Trump and Republicans are committed to putting small businesses before red tape.

In conclusion, God bless our troops as the global war on terrorism continues. Open borders for dictators put all Americans at risk of more 9/11 attacks imminent as warned by the FBI. Trump will reinstitute existing laws to protect American families with peace through strength.

HOUSTON FREEDMEN'S TOWN CONSERVANCY

(Mrs. LEE CARTER asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. LEE CARTER. Madam Speaker, today I rise to highlight the Houston Freedmen's Town Conservancy, an organization dedicated to preserving the legacy of Freedmen's Town in the Fourth Ward of Houston, Texas, one of the most historic African-American communities in our Nation.

On June 19, 1865, the day now known as Juneteenth, when General Granger enforced the Emancipation Proclamation in Galveston, many formerly enslaved people made their way to Houston, where they built a thriving community against incredible odds.

The Houston Freedmen's Town Conservancy, established in 2018, plays a crucial role in preserving this nationally registered historical site. I acknowledge its leadership, President Eileen Lawal, and Vice President Harry Johnson, who continue to protect this community's history.

I encourage Americans to visit the Freedmen's Town Museums Houston, founded in 1996, which continues to educate the public about the community's rich legacy, inspired by the vision of Olee Yates McCullough and her father, Rutherford B.H. Yates.

Thanks to these organizations, Freedmen's Town has been designated as Houston's first heritage district and has earned recognition in UNESCO's Routes of Enslaved Peoples Project.

Preserving Freedmen's Town is essential not just to honor the past, but to ensure that all generations understand the sacrifices and achievements of the formerly enslaved.

DESIGNATION OF INDIVIDUAL AS CO-CHAIR TO THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE NAVY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces, on behalf of the Speaker and the Republican Leader of the Senate, their joint designation, pursuant to 1092(b)(2) of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2023 (Public Law 117-263), and the order of the House of January 9, 2023, of the following individual to serve as Co-Chair of the Commission on the Future of the Navy:

Ms. Mackenzie Eaglen, Arlington, Virginia

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

GOOD FAITH EXCEPTION TO THE IMPOSITION OF CERTAIN FINES

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S.

3960) to amend title 35, United States Code, to provide a good faith exception to the imposition of fines for false assertions and certifications, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3960

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. GOOD FAITH EXCEPTION TO THE IMPOSITION OF CERTAIN FINES.

Title 35, United States Code, is amended—
(1) in section 41(j), by inserting “; unless the entity shows that the assertion was made in good faith,” before “be subject”; and
(2) in section 123(f), by inserting “; unless the entity shows that the certification was made in good faith,” before “be subject”.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on S. 3960.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, this bill is a win for small businesses and small inventors.

Small businesses may qualify for reduced application fees when applying at the United States Patent and Trademark Office. However, under 35 U.S.C. sections 41 and 123, a small business may claim small-entity or micro-entity status. For example, the standard cost of filing a utility patent is \$320. A small entity, however, pays just one-half of that, \$128; and a micro entity is charged only \$64.

When Congress passed the Unleashing American Innovators Act in 2023, the law required the United States Patent and Trademark Office director to impose punitive fines on entities falsely asserting or certifying entitlement to these reduced fees. This was intended to deter unscrupulous actors from claiming the benefit for which they did not qualify.

However, in that bill, we granted no exceptions under existing laws for those who made an honest error in good faith. For example, if an employee is mistakenly categorized as a contractor rather than an employee, a good-faith mistake could cause them to claim the wrong status. Or if there is a mistake in information provided by another company that is a licensee, that could also result in that.

The impact of these punitive fines would be disproportionate to the honest mistake. These harsh fines may deter entities from seeking the benefit of small- or micro-entity status since

the potential cost of the fine would far outweigh the benefit.

To ensure that small businesses can get these reduced fees, in concert with the House, S. 3960 gives the USPTO director the authority to waive punitive penalties when a business demonstrates that it acted in good faith.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support S. 3960 which will ensure that small businesses, if claiming incorrectly, have an opportunity to make right their mistake, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 3960. This legislation makes a minor technical change to give the Patent and Trademark Office the flexibility to decide when to penalize patent applicants for false certifications of eligibility for fee reductions.

When Congress passed the Unleashing American Innovators Act as part of the government funding package for fiscal year 2023, we did so with the intention of making patents no longer the sport of kings but an opportunity for inventors to make a decent living.

Innovators should not have to work for a Big Tech company, major manufacturer, or any other powerhouse of industry to be able to file a patent, but that is exactly what often happens.

Financial hurdles associated with obtaining and owning a patent, from hiring a lawyer to searching for prior art, to paying standard application fees, can prevent individuals from seeking patents for their inventions. Barriers to entry like these hurt everyone, but above all they hurt women, veterans, and minorities who often do not have the resources to go it alone.

The result is that fewer ideas make it out there into the American innovation space. All of our talent becomes siloed in just a few companies and in just a few industries, and prospective creators shelve their ideas for another day.

The Unleashing American Innovators Act sought to disrupt the current state of play by making a series of good-government changes to the way the USPTO works, including by increasing the discount on fees for small and micro entities and by imposing penalties for making fraudulent certifications to obtain a discount.

However, I am sure many out there will be shocked to learn that Congress sometimes makes mistakes, and in creating these new fee waivers and associated penalties for trying to abuse said waivers, we neglected to consider that applicants can make honest mistakes in their applications.

If innovators are too afraid to apply for financial exemptions because penalties for honest mistakes can lose them a chance at a patent, then all of our improvements may as well simply not exist.

S. 3960 would correct this minor error. Under this legislative fix, a

USPTO director would no longer be forced to fine a good-faith actor who erroneously asserts that they are entitled to a fee reduction for small- or micro-entity status. By allowing for honest mistakes in the application process, this technical fix will ensure that everyone has a seat at the table.

I thank the chairman of the Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet Subcommittee, Mr. ISSA, for introducing the House version of this legislation, which I was proud to join along with Congresswoman ROSS. I thank Ms. ROSS for leading the Unleashing American Innovators Act.

This legislation has already passed the Senate, and I encourage all Members to support it so that we can send it to the President's desk.

Madam Speaker, in closing, failing to account for good-faith mistakes harms the exact same people the Unleashing American Innovators Act sought to help. Individuals and entities that can barely afford filing fees certainly do not have the financial resources to weather a hefty fine.

Moreover, unlike large entities, the prospect of losing a patent associated with an erroneous application could very well mean losing everything. Smaller entities, therefore, are the most likely to avoid the risk of applying for the very programs that exist to help them.

This legislation will ensure that the USPTO director will no longer be forced to fine inventors who make honest mistakes when they apply for a patent, ensuring that the people we were trying to help in creating the program are not chilled from participation.

Again, I support this legislation, I encourage my colleagues to do the same, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1430

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time for the purposes of closing.

Madam Speaker, we often get chastised in the House for not admitting our mistakes, but when a technical error could potentially lead to damages to the private sector, it is one of those areas I am proud to say that the Judiciary Committee is bipartisan and quick to recognize. In concert with the Senate, we have done so today.

Madam Speaker, I urge all Members to vote for the 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 California (Mr. ISSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3960.

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.

CONSOLIDATION OF CERTAIN DIVISIONS IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

Mr. ISSA. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7177) to amend title 28, United States Code, to consolidate certain divisions in the Northern District of Alabama, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7177

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. CONSOLIDATION OF CERTAIN DIVISIONS IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA.

Section 81(a) of title 28, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “seven” and inserting “five”;

(2) in paragraph (1), by striking “and Lauderdale” and inserting “Lauderdale, and Lawrence”;

(3) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking “Lawrence,”;

(B) by inserting after “Madison,” the following: “Marshall,”; and

(C) by striking “and Decatur”;

(4) in paragraph (4), by striking “Clay, Cleburne,” and inserting “Cherokee, Clay, Cleburne, DeKalb, Etowah, Saint Clair,”;

(5) in paragraph (5), by striking “Greene, Pickens, Sumter, and Tuscaloosa” and inserting “Fayette, Greene, Lamar, Marion, Pickens, Sumter, Tuscaloosa, Walker, and Winston”;

(6) by striking paragraph (6); and

(7) by striking paragraph (7).

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. 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 H.R. 7177.

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

There was no objection.

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

Madam Speaker, this is, in fact, a good, commonsense reform that has come from the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. STRONG), who has shepherded this bill.

At this time, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. STRONG) to speak on his bill.

Mr. STRONG. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of my bill, H.R. 7177, which will improve the organization of the Federal courts in the Northern District of Alabama.

Specifically, this bill will ensure that Alabamians are assigned to the closest and most convenient Federal courthouse, which will eliminate unnecessary and burdensome travel expenses. This commonsense proposal, which was