

development activities that are currently under way. Investments in R&D are critical to providing high-paying jobs for Americans, increasing small business innovation, and ensuring our country remains competitive.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. LALOTA and Mr. THANEDAR for their bipartisan work, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA).

Mr. LALOTA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WILLIAMS for yielding and for his leadership on the Small Business Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of my bill, the bipartisan DOE and SBA Research Act.

The DOE and SBA Research Act would simply require the Small Business Administration and America's 17 national labs to collaborate to ensure that small businesses are better utilized within the Department of Energy procurement process.

The Department of Energy is one of the largest procurers of small business goods and services in the government. Through the DOE's national laboratories, small businesses can play a critical role in executing the DOE's mission.

My district, which is home to one of these laboratories, Brookhaven National Lab, which is leading the way by prioritizing working with small businesses, specifically BNL and Suffolk County small businesses have created a mutually beneficial relationship based upon cooperative research and technical assistance.

Despite good intentions throughout the Federal system, far too often small businesses have been made to endure tremendous frustrations related to Federal contracting because the Federal contracting process is incredibly complex and bureaucratic and plagued with many inconsistencies and nuances.

Some programs, such as the Small Business Innovation Research program, operate differently in each agency. This means a small business utilizing the same program may have to meet significantly different requirements from one agency to the next.

My bill, the DOE and SBA Research Act, seeks to remedy this problem.

A small business' work with the Federal Government can be a frustrating maze, and this bipartisan bill will help bring existing resources and opportunities to innovative and successful small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to support the DOE and SBA Research Act.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. I am ready to close, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, small businesses produce more than 14 times more patents than large businesses and universities and employ nearly 40 percent of scientists and engineers. Enhancing coordination between the Small Business Administration and the Department of Energy will hopefully increase opportunities for small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the sponsors for their work, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation from Mr. THANEDAR and Mr. LALOTA, 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. 4669, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to provide for Department of Energy and Small Business Administration joint research and development activities, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WOSB CERTIFICATION AND OPPORTUNITY EXPANSION ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 7105) to establish requirements relating to certification of small business concerns owned and controlled by women for certain purposes, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 7105

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 "WOSB Certification and Opportunity Expansion Act".

SEC. 2. EXCLUSION OF SELF-CERTIFIED SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN FROM GOALS.

(a) EXCLUSION OF SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS FROM GOVERNMENTWIDE AND AGENCY GOALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 15(g) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 644(g)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(4) EXCLUSION OF SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS FROM GOALS.—Only small business concerns owned and controlled by women that have been certified under section 8(m)(2)(E) shall be included in calculating the goals established—

"(A) under paragraph (1)(A)(v); and

"(B) by the head of a Federal agency for small business concerns owned and controlled by women under paragraph (2)."

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by paragraph (1) shall take effect on the first day after the end of the second fiscal year beginning after the Administrator issues the regulations required under subsection (b)(2).

(b) REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS.—

(1) INCLUSION OF CERTAIN SELF-CERTIFIED WOSBS IN GOALS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a small business concern described in subparagraph (B) shall be deemed to have been certified by the Administrator or a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator under section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)) as a small business concern owned and controlled by women under paragraph (2)(E) of such section (15 U.S.C. 637(m)(2)(E)) for the purposes of calculating the goals described in paragraph (4) of section 15(g) of the such Act (as added by subsection (a) of this Act) until the Administrator or such a national certifying entity make a determination with respect to the certification of such concern.

(B) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS DESCRIBED.—A small business concern described in this subparagraph is a small business concern—

(i) that is self-certified as a small business concern owned and controlled by women as of the date on which the amendments made by subsection (a) take effect;

(ii) that files a certification application with the Administrator or a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator under section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)) prior to such date; and

(iii) for which the Administrator or such a national certifying entity does not make a determination prior to such date regarding certification pursuant to such certification application.

(2) RULEMAKING.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall issue regulations carrying out this section.

(c) QUARTERLY BRIEFINGS REQUIRED.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and on a quarterly basis thereafter until the date specified in subsection (b), the Administrator shall provide to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate a briefing on the implementation of the requirements of this section. Such briefings shall include—

(1) the total number of small business concerns expected to seek certification as a small business concern owned and controlled by women;

(2) the number of applications for certification pending with the Administrator or a national certifying entity approved by the Administrator under section 8(m) of the Small Business Act during the period covered by the briefing;

(3) the total number of applications approved by the Administrator or such a national certifying entity since the date of the enactment of this Act;

(4) the timelines associated with processing such applications by the Administrator or such a national certifying entity between submission and approval;

(5) the administrative costs to the Administration to make determinations on such applications and the estimated cost to such applicant to seek certification from a national certifying entity;

(6) a discussion of the Administrator's current and future outreach efforts to small business concerns owned and controlled by women and to Federal agencies on the requirements of this Act; and

(7) recommendations for additional legislative authority or resources required to fully implement the requirements of this Act.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ADMINISTRATION.—The term “Administration” means the Small Business Administration.

(2) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

(3) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN.—The term “small business concern” has the meaning given under section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632).

(4) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY WOMEN.—The term “small business concern owned and controlled by women” has the meaning given the term in section 8(m) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 637(m)).

(e) 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. 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.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 7105, the WOSB Certification and Opportunity Expansion Act, sponsored by the Committee on Small Business' Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ.

One of the Committee on Small Business' top priorities is combating fraud and abuse within the government's contracting programs. Small business participation in Federal contracting ensures a strong and resilient industrial base.

Congress sets a governmentwide goal to spend at least 5 percent of its procurement dollars with women-owned small businesses. However, since this goal contains self-certified firms, it is hard to tell the accuracy of the data. This bill would remove self-certified firms from this governmentwide goal. This will add accountability measures to make sure the businesses competing for these contracting dollars are not misrepresenting themselves.

I was proud to work with the ranking member on this important piece of legislation. I urge all of my colleagues to vote for H.R. 7105 and ensure that certified women small business owners are not unfairly shut out of the Federal marketplace by fraudsters.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, empowering female entrepreneurs has long been a top priority of mine and enhancing the programs that impact the success of women-owned small businesses continues to guide my work on our committee.

That is why I am pleased we are considering my legislation, the WOSB Certification and Opportunity Expansion Act, which, as amended, will improve and enhance the SBA's women-owned small business contracting program.

The WOSB program is a valuable tool for Federal agencies to contract with small businesses that are owned by women. However, a number of factors hinder the program's effectiveness. These limitations then translate into reduced contracting opportunities.

As a result, the data continues to show that women-owned small businesses are not seeing the contracting opportunities that should accompany the level of participation in the Federal marketplace.

My bill will move away from self-certification and require Federal agencies to only count contracts awarded to certified WOSBs toward their procurement goals.

This bill will help address a major concern that I regularly hear from WOSBs: that the program is more difficult to use than the other SBA programs, and that it is in part because WOSBs are not SBA certified.

Stakeholders highlight that when combined with other confusing and cumbersome WOSB-specific requirements, the lack of SBA certification creates a risk that disincentivizes use of the authorities by contracting officers.

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It is my hope that by moving more WOSBs through the SBA certification process, we will see Federal agencies more confidently and frequently set aside sole source contracts to women-owned small businesses.

That has always been the goal of the WOSB program: to level the playing field for women in industries where they are underrepresented. My bill helps to do just that, and I urge all Members to support it.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. LALOTA).

Mr. LALOTA. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman WILLIAMS for yielding me the time today and Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ, a fellow proud New Yorker, for leading this effort with me. It is a good day when Members of the same State delegation from different parties can work together to benefit New York's small businesses and small businesses throughout this great country of ours.

Mr. Speaker, our bipartisan WOSB Certification and Opportunity Expansion Act would phase out self-certified,

women-owned small businesses from the governmentwide procurement goals. In doing so, this bill would achieve two main things. It will protect the integrity of the women-owned small business program, and it will prevent the abuse of Federal small business contracting goals.

Self-certification, according to the SBA Office of Inspector General and others, presents significant risks of fraud and impedes the progress of businesses which rightfully qualify. While others can self-certify, women small business owners in the SBA's women-owned small business program undergo a certification program to ensure that only women-owned firms enter.

This bill aligns the women-owned small business program with similar programs that no longer count self-certified firms in the SBA's goals. A similar provision phasing out self-certified service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses from the procurement goals passed in the FY24 NDAA.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the WOSB Certification and Opportunity Expansion Act.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

Mr. Speaker, I have drafted this bill in a way that I believe ensures women-owned small businesses will not be harmed during the transition away from self-certification and that Congress has the tools necessary to conduct oversight of that transition.

There are sufficient protections built into the legislation so that women-owned firms are not penalized and specifically will not lose contracts if issues arise during implementation. Utilizing WOSBs in our Federal marketplace is critical for their success and the success of our national economy.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this important bill to enhance the WOSB program, bolster its use, and provide female entrepreneurs with additional opportunities for success. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation from Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ and Congressman LALOTA. 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. 7105, 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.

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION RURAL PERFORMANCE REPORT ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5265) to amend the Small Business Act to require a report on the performance of the Office of Rural Affairs, to require a report on the memorandum of understanding between the Small Business Administration and the Department of Agriculture entered into on April 4, 2018, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5265

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 “Small Business Administration Rural Performance Report Act”.

SEC. 2. SMALL BUSINESS RURAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS.

(a) OFFICE OF RURAL AFFAIRS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT.—Section 26 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 653) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) REPORTS.—

“(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this subsection, the Administrator shall make available on a website of the Administration, and submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate, a report on the activities of the Office during the year preceding the date of the report that includes the following elements:

“(A) How the Office is promoting financial assistance pursuant to subsection (c)(1).

“(B) Annual statistics compiled pursuant to subsection (c)(2).

“(C) How the Office is providing information pursuant to subsection (c)(3).

“(D) How the Office is providing information pursuant to subsection (c)(4).

“(E) The number of outreach events conducted by the Office to provide information described in paragraphs (3) and (4) of subsection (c).

“(F) Details of any partnerships that the Office engaged in to provide the outreach described in paragraph (5), including any partnerships with the National Travel and Tourism Office of the Department of Commerce.

“(G) The name of the director of the Office and the number of staff employed by the Office.

“(2) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Administrator shall annually submit, along with the budget the budget justification materials submitted in support of the Small Business Administration budget for a fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), a report that includes the elements described in paragraph (1).”.

(b) TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.—Section 26(c)(5) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 653(c)(5)) is amended by striking “United States Tourism and Travel Administration” and inserting “National Travel and Tourism Office of the Department of Commerce”.

(c) MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall make available on a website of the Administration and submit to the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Small Business

and Entrepreneurship of the Senate a report on the MOU. Such report shall include a description of the following:

(1) How many working groups convened pursuant to the MOU the Administration was part of and if the Administration is still part of any such working groups.

(2) How many staff employed by the Administration were and are still involved with a working group convened pursuant to the MOU.

(3) The findings specified in clauses (i) through (iv) of paragraph (1) of part 2 of the MOU.

(4) The findings specified in clauses (i) through (iv) of paragraph (2) of part 2 of the MOU.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—The term “Administration” means the Small Business Administration.

(3) MOU.—The term “MOU” means the memorandum of understanding between the Department of Agriculture and the Small Business Administration entered into on April 4, 2018, about collaborative efforts to promote stronger businesses and agricultural economies in rural America.

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 gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. 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.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5265, the Small Business Administration Rural Performance Report Act, sponsored by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. ALFORD).

It should come as no surprise that rural entrepreneurs face unique challenges. In extending assistance to these entrepreneurs, the Department of Agriculture and the Small Business Administration offer a variety of programs to help them start and grow their businesses.

Unfortunately, government agencies often act in a silo and become ineffective in their outreach. That is why the Trump administration created a partnership between the USDA and the SBA to better tailor their outreach and services to rural entrepreneurs.

After our committee marked up this bill, we were happy to see the SBA announce that they are going to work to

renew another agreement with the Department of Agriculture. While this progress should not go unnoticed, this bill goes further to require a report to track the effectiveness of this agreement and the SBA's Office of Rural Affairs. If we are going to be spending taxpayer dollars to help accomplish a goal, there must be performance metrics to see where the ROI is for the taxpayers and the businesses they are helping.

Mr. Speaker, it is vital that Congress knows just how impactful these efforts are so we can ensure our rural entrepreneurs are not left behind. I urge my colleagues to vote for H.R. 5265, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Today, we are considering H.R. 5265, the Small Business Administration Rural Performance Report Act, which, as amended, requires an annual performance report and budget justification for the Office of Rural Affairs.

Mr. GOLDEN has worked relentlessly to increase SBA outreach to rural small businesses and make sure the Office of Rural Affairs remains active. I commend Mr. GOLDEN for his efforts, and I am quite disappointed we are not considering his legislation today, which would have enhanced the Office of Rural Affairs and was unanimously approved by the committee in September. I look forward to its speedy consideration.

Today, we are considering legislation that would require a performance report and budget updates from the Office of Rural Affairs so that we can stay apprised of its activities. Currently, we get this information by simply asking the agency for an update, but this bill would now statutorily mandate that it is provided.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. PAPPAS for joining Mr. ALFORD in sponsoring this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. ALFORD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the leadership of our Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ and our esteemed Chairman WILLIAMS. It is, indeed, a pleasure to be on this committee. There are many Members here today who are on the Small Business Committee and are making a difference for America in every piece of legislation we pass.

I rise today to speak on the Small Business Administration Rural Performance Report Act, a bill that we introduced to support our rural small businesses.

These businesses are essential to rural America, providing over 54 percent of employment in rural communities and counties. This bill would help us understand how the Small Business Administration is really helping them succeed.

The bill requires two reports. First, it would give us insight into the Office