

on this bill. I urge my colleagues to support S. 206, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

This bill is a commonsense step to address the fentanyl crisis and save American lives. By requiring U.S. Customs and Border Protection to incorporate and continually update uniform policies and standards for their operations at ports of entry, we can be sure our officers continually adapt and implement their inspection practices to the changing dynamics of illicit activities along U.S. borders.

It is important that we continue supporting necessary improvements for our ports of entry, where approximately 90 percent of CBP's fentanyl seizures occur.

This bill complements the unprecedented progress that the Department of Homeland Security has made in recent years to stop fentanyl from entering our communities. DHS has launched new cross-government efforts to target smugglers and put more personnel, technology, infrastructure, and resources at our border. As a result, DHS has seized more fentanyl and arrested more criminals for fentanyl-related crimes in the last 2 years than over the last previous 5 years combined.

DHS has taken serious action to thwart human trafficking and human smuggling through ports of entry. The END FENTANYL Act builds on these efforts, as well.

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

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. GUEST), the leader of the House companion bill to S. 206 and the vice chair of the Committee on Homeland Security.

Mr. GUEST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 206, the END FENTANYL Act. I am a proud sponsor of the House companion bill. I thank my friend, Senator RICK SCOTT, for leading this bipartisan effort in the United States Senate. I also thank Congressman DAVID TRONE for co-leading this legislation in the House.

This bill would require the United States Customs and Border Protection, CBP, to regularly review and update their inspection practices at ports of entry. It would also require them to respond to any new or innovative smuggling methods. This bill would require CBP to brief Congress on new inspection practices. The goal of this bill is to ensure that CBP is employing the most up-to-date methods to interdict and prevent illegal activities, such as the smuggling of deadly narcotics like fentanyl into our country.

As Chairman GREEN said, this bill was introduced in direct response to a 2019 Government Accountability Office report, which found that CBP's inspection techniques were not uniform across different ports of entry and in

some cases found that they were entirely outdated. The GAO report determined: "Because CBP has not updated many of its policies—in a few cases for almost 20 years—they do not always reflect changes in technology or processes, such as those for conducting searches and handling fentanyl."

Mr. Speaker, the END FENTANYL Act will be a valuable tool in our fight against the deadly scourge of fentanyl, which has devastated families and communities across our country. From May of 2022 to May of 2023, the U.S. suffered over 112,000 overdose deaths, with many of those deaths being attributed directly or indirectly to the use of fentanyl. Fentanyl poisoning is now the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45.

As cartels continue to develop new methods to traffic these deadly drugs in the United States, this bill will ensure that CBP responds to any new smuggling techniques in a uniform manner, with the most up-to-date and effective practices.

In closing, this bill will save lives and is a first step to securing our border from those smuggling drugs into our communities. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting S. 206.

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

I thank the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. GUEST) for introducing the END FENTANYL Act. It is a key step forward to ensure that we are better prepared to stop fentanyl smuggling. By regularly improving our strategies at our ports of entry, we can ensure that the Department of Homeland Security is keeping our communities safe.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this incredible measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

I again urge my colleagues to support S. 206. I thank Mr. GUEST for his work in assisting Senator SCOTT, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GREEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 206.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this question will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

DHS BORDER SERVICES CONTRACTS REVIEW ACT

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4467) to direct the Under Secretary for Management of the Department of Homeland Security to assess contracts for covered services performed by contractor personnel along the United States land border with Mexico, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4467

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 "DHS Border Services Contracts Review Act".

SEC. 2. ASSESSMENT OF CONTRACTS FOR COVERED SERVICES BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.

(a) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Under Secretary for Management of the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with appropriate officials of the Department, shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report regarding active contracts for covered services of the Department awarded on or before—

(A) September 30, 2023, or

(B) the date of the enactment of this Act, whichever occurs later.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The criteria used by the Department of Homeland Security to determine whether contractor personnel were necessary to assist the Department in carrying out its mission along the United States land border with Mexico.

(B) An analysis of the purpose, quantity, and location of contractor personnel to perform covered services of the Department with respect to effectively—

(i) addressing mission needs along such border; and

(ii) enhancing the capability of Department personnel to perform primary mission responsibilities, including the number of Department personnel not removed from their primary mission responsibilities by reason of the performance of covered services by contractor personnel.

(C) An assessment with respect to the benefits of contractor personnel performing covered services, including whether the performance of such services by contractor personnel is more efficient or effective than the performance of such services by Department employees.

(D) An assessment of opportunities to increase the efficiency of the Department with respect to contracting, including whether Department-wide contract vehicles for covered services would be the most cost effective option for the performance of covered services.

(E) A strategy to improve the procurement and delivery of covered services through contracts during the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act to—

(i) achieve the best value for the Department through the use of full and open competition; and

(ii) ensure no lapse in the performance of such services.

(F) Recommendations based on findings resulting from the analysis and assessments required in subparagraphs (B) through (D).

(G) Any other information relating to contracts for covered services that the Under Secretary for Management determines appropriate.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Under Secretary for Management shall submit with the report required under subsection (a) a plan to implement

the recommendations and strategy contained in such report to enhance coordination, minimize overlap, and increase cost effectiveness among contracts for covered services.

(2) **BRIEFING.**—Not later than 180 days after the date on which the Under Secretary for Management submits the report required under subsection (a) and the plan required under paragraph (1) and every 180 days thereafter until such plan is fully implemented, the Under Secretary, or the designee of the Under Secretary, shall provide to the appropriate congressional committees a briefing with respect to the status of such implementation.

(c) **PROHIBITION ON FUNDING.**—No funds are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section. This section shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized to be made available for such purposes.

(d) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

(1) **APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.**—The term “appropriate congressional committees” means—

(A) the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives; and

(B) the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

(2) **CONTRACT FOR COVERED SERVICES.**—The term “contract for covered services” means a contract (with a total contract value of \$50,000,000 or more in 2023 constant dollars, inclusive of contract options) relating to the procurement of covered services for the Department of Homeland Security.

(3) **COVERED SERVICES.**—The term “covered services” means, with respect to the United States land border with Mexico, any service, including related to border security, provided by a contractor to be used by the Department.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GREEN) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. CARTER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. 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 H.R. 4467.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4467. As we are all aware, the volume of migrant encounters along the U.S.-Mexico border has increased exponentially in the past few years. As such, it has been necessary for the Department of Homeland Security to secure goods and services from contractors to care for migrants taken into custody by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. These contracts have enabled our dedicated Border Patrol agents and CBP officers to remain focused on their primary mission of securing our borders. Unfortunately, in the past, DHS has had issues with respect to awarding such contracts.

H.R. 4467, the DHS Border Services Contracts Review Act, directs DHS to assess active contracts for covered services performed by contractor personnel along the U.S. land border with

Mexico and submit to Congress a report with recommendations and strategies to improve the procurement and delivery of services through such contracts.

I thank Congressman BRECHEEN for his work on this bill, and I urge my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 4467, a very important piece of legislation.

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

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

DHS spends billions of dollars on service contracts to support its various missions, including its mission to secure the southwest border. These contracts provide a wide range of services such as transportation, medical care, and facilities to house migrants.

Given both the cost and the importance of these contracts to DHS' southwest border mission, H.R. 4467, introduced by Mr. BRECHEEN, seeks to improve DHS' procurement of contractor services used along the southwest border.

The bill requires DHS to identify service contracts valued at more than \$50 million used along the southwest border and to assess whether those contracts are necessary to assist DHS in carrying out its mission.

The bill also calls upon DHS to identify areas to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness in its use of service contracts along the southwest border and to develop a strategy and implementation plan to carry out such improvements.

Finally, the bill also requires DHS to share its assessments, strategy, and plans with Congress both through a report and in standing briefings.

H.R. 4467 had bipartisan support both in this Congress and last, passing through the committee by voice vote.

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

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. BRECHEEN), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. BRECHEEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the DHS Border Services Contracts Review Act, H.R. 4467.

It goes without saying that the Border Patrol is overwhelmed when handling hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens coming across our southern border, and our national debt is increasing by nearly \$1 trillion every 100 days. Congress must provide the oversight necessary and do everything in its power to simultaneously assist Border Patrol and also cut back on inefficient spending.

Federal contractors have a role within DHS when the Federal Government cannot meet the requirements necessary to carry out its mission. In the last decade, DHS has increasingly relied on service contracts to carry out these operations. According to the Government Accountability Office,

DHS' contracted services have increased by 40 percent between fiscal years 2013 and 2018, obligating nearly \$70 billion in contracts over that 5-year window.

In May of 2020, the GAO conducted a study on DHS service contracts that the Department uses for assistance. They examined eight DHS contracts and found that three-quarters of those contractors were never given any guidance by DHS on actions that are inherently under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. GAO also reported that DHS has no consistent plan for contract oversight necessary to prevent overlapping work with contractors. This lack of guidance and potential overlap in functions highlights a glaring need for this report, especially considering the financial dilemma that we find ourselves in today.

To combat this potential problem, H.R. 4467 directs the Department of Homeland Security Under Secretary for Management to assess contracts above \$50 million for covered services performed by contractor personnel along the U.S. border with Mexico to minimize overlap and cut inefficiencies.

This legislation requires the USM to report to Congress on active contracts, recommendations on how they can better be used to increase efficiency, and the criteria used to determine when contractor personnel is necessary for DHS to carry out its mission.

If enacted, this bill would provide needed clarity and oversight on which service contracts are helping DHS at the border and where there is room for improved efficiencies.

To ensure that taxpayer dollars are used responsibly, it includes a provision that prohibits the Department from requesting additional funding to carry out this legislation. I will reiterate that: Section 2(c) specifies that this legislation will not cost a dime.

I thank Chairman GREEN and the committee staff, and I urge all Members to support this commonsense legislation.

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Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I have no more speakers, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from Oklahoma (Mr. BRECHEEN) for introducing this bill aimed at improving DHS' procurement of contracted services used along the southern border.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4467, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 4467, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GREEN) that the House suspend the

rules and pass the bill, HR. 4467, 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.

DHS BIODETECTION IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6174) to improve the bioterrorism functions of the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6174

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 “DHS Biodefense Improvement Act”.

SEC. 2. DHS UTILIZATION OF DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY NATIONAL LABORATORIES AND SITES FOR CERTAIN BIODETECTION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT RELATING TO THE MISSIONS OF THE DHS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall conduct an assessment of how the Department of Homeland Security has utilized Department of Energy national laboratories and sites regarding research and development in carrying out the missions of the Department of Homeland Security, in accordance with section 309 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 189).

(b) STRATEGY ON BIODETECTION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate the assessment required under subsection (a), together with a strategy for how the Department of Homeland Security will conduct research and development in coordination with Department of Energy national laboratories and sites to address bioterrorism research and development of the Department of Homeland Security, including the following:

(1) Identifying bioterrorism technologies that can, either individually or together, meet the bioterrorism mission needs as outlined in Department of Homeland Security capabilities analysis and requirements documents and informed by studies produced by the Comptroller General of the United States, such as the National Re-Assessment of the BioWatch Collector Network to Increase the Fraction of Population Covered, as developed by the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office of the Department in November 2021, and other such future studies as applicable.

(2) Developing an acquisition and procurement plan to acquire and provide, in accordance with Federal law, the Federal Acquisition Regulation, and Department of Homeland Security acquisition and procurement management directives, the bioterrorism technologies referred to in paragraph (1) to existing BioWatch jurisdictions.

(3) Conducting periodic external evaluations to identify gaps and potential failure points with respect to such bioterrorism technologies, and recommending contingency plans in the event such bioterrorism

technologies do not perform as expected or intended.

(4) Assisting, as appropriate and in partnership with Federal, State, local, and Tribal governments, institutions of higher education (as such term is defined in section 101 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001)), and the private sector, with the development of clearly defined program and technical requirements for future Department of Homeland Security environmental bioterrorism programs, including any related transformational program of research and development.

(c) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Homeland Security shall provide to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate an update of the assessment and strategy required under this section, including any challenges to implementing such strategy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. GREEN) and the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. CARTER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. 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 H.R. 6174.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6174. The Department of Homeland Security established the BioWatch program to collect and test air samples for biological agents likely to be used in a bioterrorism attack. However, there have been ample criticisms and questions about the effectiveness of the BioWatch program.

As such, in 2019, DHS launched a new acquisition program to move into the next generation of detection of bioterrorism and to replace the BioWatch program with new and more reliable technology.

However, DHS has not used all the resources at its disposal, including the national laboratories housed within the Department of Energy.

H.R. 6174, the DHS Biodefense Improvement Act, would ensure that DHS is doing everything it can to improve bioterrorism research and development, including requiring DHS to explain how it plans to utilize the expertise of the Department of Energy national labs.

I thank Congressman STRONG for his work on this bill, and I hope all Members will support this legislation today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6174, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6174, the DHS Biodefense Improvement Act. This bill seeks to enhance bioterrorism capabilities at the Department of Homeland Security by leveraging resources at the Department of Energy's national laboratories.

Currently, DHS' Office of Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction, or CWMD, leads DHS' bioterrorism work. The premier bioterrorism program is BioWatch, which is outdated, expensive, and labor-intensive. CWMD's more recent efforts to advance bioterrorism technologies have been delayed because of this.

H.R. 6174 would move DHS' bioterrorism programs forward by requiring the Department to complete an assessment of how it is utilizing the Department of Energy's national laboratories for bioterrorism. The bill would require DHS to create the defined program and technical requirements necessary to advance bioterrorism programs, including critical research and development.

Further, the bill requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to provide Congress with a strategy for conducting regular external evaluations to identify capability gaps and recommend contingency plans if bioterrorism technologies underperform.

As foreign and domestic security threats evolve, Congress' support for advancements in bioterrorism programs is key.

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

Mr. GREEN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. STRONG), the sponsor of this bill.

Mr. STRONG. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman GREEN for his support, as well as that of my colleagues who join me in introducing this legislation, H.R. 6174, the DHS Biodefense Improvement Act.

Threats from America's enemies have continued to evolve and become more complex. The anthrax attack of 2001 opened our eyes to a new threat landscape that includes acts of bioterrorism. In the wake of the 2001 attacks, the Department of Homeland Security established the BioWatch program, which monitors, collects, and tests air samples for biological agents likely to be used in a terrorist attack.

This technology is vital in protecting Americans against bioweapons, and we must have full confidence that it will deliver timely, accurate, and comprehensive information to our partners that operate this system.

As a first responder myself, I know the difference that early detection makes. This becomes more vital when responding to an act of bioterrorism, which could have catastrophic consequences.

We have worked across all levels of government to improve prevention, detection, and response capabilities, but there remains work to be done.