

FEDERAL DISASTER TAX RELIEF
ACT OF 2023

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 5863 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5863) to provide tax relief with respect to certain Federal disasters.

There being no objection, the committee is discharged and the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read a third time.

Mr. PADILLA. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the bill?

Hearing none, the bill having been read a third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 5863) was passed.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I thank you for that.

For the folks watching at home, we just passed a significant disaster tax bill, which is critical to helping disaster survivors across the country, and it includes bipartisan legislation that I introduced, along with Senator WYDEN and Senator CASSIDY.

Our Protect Innocent Victims Of Taxation After Fire Act would make sure that individuals, families, and entire communities who have suffered from utility-caused wildfires can receive the full compensation to rebuild their lives without fear that their settlement payments will be subject to taxes.

In my home State of California, over 70,000 people have been impacted by the destruction of the Butte fire, the North Bay fire, and the Camp fire in recent years.

Now, if you can imagine when you are wading through the ashes of your former home and thinking about how you can possibly begin to rebuild, the last thing you should have to worry about is that the government is going to tax the payment from your legal settlement that already fails to cover the full cost of your losses in the first place.

Disaster settlement funds aren't income. It is not an asset. It is compensation for what a family has lost. It is meant to be an opportunity to begin to rebuild your life—an opportunity that should not be diminished because our Tax Code is outdated.

And it is not just for my constituents—my constituents looking to rebuild—utility-caused fires are becoming increasingly common across the Western United States. This bill we just passed would make sure that all recent and future wildfire victims throughout the country have access to their full settlements. That includes those in Oregon and Hawaii who have either reached settlements or are still working through the process with the utilities that caused devastating wildfires.

This measure is a commonsense, bipartisan solution to protect Americans at the most difficult time in their lives.

I want to take a moment to thank Senator CASSIDY and Senator WYDEN for their partnership, as well as my California colleagues in the House, Representatives MIKE THOMPSON and DOUG LAMALFA, for their leadership on the issue in that Chamber. I look forward to seeing the President sign this bill into law as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, while he is on the floor, let me thank Senator PADILLA for our partnership, these many months, and also to Senator CASSIDY. And we Westerners have really strong views about this because the fires of the West today are not your grandfather's fires. They are bigger. They are hotter. They are more powerful. They are leaping over rivers. And the families that my colleague and I are talking about feel like they have been hit by a wrecking ball.

And after getting clobbered, they are saying to themselves, why can't I get a fair shake from the government? Why are they hitting me again, even though I don't have any income—as my colleague has said so well. These are people who have truly been visited by a disaster. Their homes and their businesses are burned. Their possessions and livelihood are gone.

And finally, the Federal Government is showing some common sense. That is what my friend from California has spelled out. Our effort is going to lift a big tax burden off these victims of wildfires and other natural disasters. We are getting rid of a totally unfair tax on legal fees associated with settlements after disasters. And by the way, we are fixing something that went haywire in the Republican's 2017 tax bill.

Now, we have been pushing our colleagues in a bipartisan way for months to do a bill that addresses this and other issues. I see in the Chair another very valuable member of the Finance Committee, our friend from New Hampshire Senator HASSAN. And she and I and others had a bill that got 357 votes in the House of Representatives that included this important legislation that Senator PADILLA and Senator CASSIDY and I have worked on.

I told my colleague that we had our 1,100th townhall meeting where the vic-

tims came and said: Ron, will it ever get done?

And I said: You bet it is going to get done. It is going to get done in the lameduck session.

They said: Why hasn't it happened earlier?

And the reality is, it should have happened earlier because you don't get 357 votes very often over there in the House of Representatives. It doesn't happen by osmosis. It is because my colleagues here are working in a bipartisan way and wanted to get this done.

So, we wanted, frankly, to do more. We wanted to do it earlier. But I say to my colleagues that we are going to keep going on the things from that package that got 357 votes in the House, like research and development expensing, which our friend from New Hampshire has championed, and ending double taxation between the U.S. and Taiwan.

But tonight, is an evening when Senator PADILLA and I have said, finally, after all this waiting, we are going to see relief for these people who have been clobbered by these huge infernos—because that is the only way to describe our fires, Senator PADILLA. These are infernos. It gets hot and dry on the forest floor. Somebody drops a match, maybe there is a lightning strike. Kaboom—and those people are finally tonight, through the work that has been done by my friend from California, and our friend from Louisiana, and a lot of Senators—Senator SCHATZ is another example—we are going to be able to tell folks in the West—it is only 5 o'clock or so in California and Oregon—who have been hit by these big fires, they are going to be able to go to bed tonight with a little relief that the Federal Government has finally come to its senses and made sure that they are not going to have this additional tax burden.

So, I want to thank my friend from California for his good work. He has been a terrific partner. I think it is very fitting that the Senator from New Hampshire is in the Chair because she, more than anybody than I know of on our committee, was really putting in the sweat equity for a bipartisan bill.

This is a good night for the people that we represent in the West. It is a good night for a lot of other people in this country. And I want to thank my colleague and the person who has led us on so many of these issues from New Hampshire, Senator HASSAN, because we are finally getting justice and a fair shake for people who did nothing wrong who have been visited by these fires and these disasters.

And the Federal Government is showing some common sense, which most of them, I think, would agree should have been shown quite some time ago. I thank my friend.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise in support of the Federal Disaster Tax Relief Act of 2024.

Three years after Hurricane Ida and months after Hurricane Francine hit Louisiana, communities are still recovering, and every bit we give helps. This bill allows Hurricanes Ida and Francine victims and other victims of natural disasters elsewhere in the country to deduct qualified disaster-related personal casualty losses from their income, even when above the standard deduction.

This is not new, and this is not novel. We have done it before. I led legislation to help the victims of Hurricane Laura and for those impacted by the great floods of 2016.

By the Senate passing the bill tonight, the bill will go to the President's desk to be signed into law, cutting taxes for Louisiana families who will use this money to rebuild. It goes without saying, we only have to look at North Carolina to say what an impact this can have elsewhere in the country.

We have to recognize that if a family wants to rebuild, we can give them a Federal handout, or we can say: Use your own resources.

And these are their own resources. The American people have always been there to help whoever has had a natural disaster. We in Louisiana have benefited. We in Louisiana will always help others.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

TRIBUTE TO LAPHONZA R. BUTLER

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I also rise today with the bittersweet task of saying farewell to my trusted partner for the State of California, Senator LAPHONZA BUTLER, as her tenure here in the Senate with us comes to end in the coming days.

You may recall that just over a year ago, Senator BUTLER was appointed to serve alongside me here in the U.S. Senate. I remember it vividly. In just a matter of days, she received a call from Governor Newsom, accepted the appointment, traveled to Washington to take the oath of office, and introduced herself to the Nation.

That alone is a tall task for anyone—imagine—to be called upon on such short notice to serve a State of nearly 40 million people—but it is another thing entirely to be asked to also, in the process, fill the shoes of the legendary Senator Dianne Feinstein, a titan of California politics and the U.S. Senate, who served with such honor and dignity and grace for over three decades, not to mention that she carried on her shoulders the fate of a narrow Senate Democratic majority. It literally rested on her appointment and willingness to serve. But as I think back and reflect on that moment in her decision to say yes, it takes a trailblazer to fill the seat of a trailblazer.

And LAPHONZA BUTLER was certainly no stranger to high stakes. She knew it and proved it as a union organizer, fighting for workers all across the Nation; she knew it as the onetime presi-

dent of California's SEIU Local 2015, representing members of California's largest home care and nursing home workers union; and she knew it as president of EMILY's List—all leadership positions that she held prior to joining us here in the Senate. So once she did join us here in the Senate, it was no surprise to me that she hit the ground running. She immediately set up an office and built a team of more than capable and passionate public servants who would help her and my office, frankly—we are a tag team, after all—serve the people of California.

Imagine, as she began to navigate the complex Senate procedures to effectively represent Californians, she was also learning, in the early days, how to simply navigate the halls of the U.S. Capitol—with the help of the legendary Alex Baldonado, I might add.

I was honored to serve alongside her here in the Senate, to offer her advice when I could and even lend staff assistance. In the year that has followed, I have been proud to work with her, nominating and confirming historic judicial nominees to the Federal bench, fighting for critical disaster funding for Californians in the relief we just passed a few minutes ago, working to protect and conserve our cherished public lands, and so much more.

Through it all, Senator BUTLER worked to also lift up the voices of all Californians, including through her Youth Advisory Council, empowering young Californians to get involved in the civic process.

So, Senator BUTLER, let the RECORD reflect that it has been an honor to serve alongside you these past 14 months. While we will miss you here in the U.S. Senate, I know that your work is far from over and that our partnership will continue. I have no doubt that I will see you in the trenches.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ARMS SALES NOTIFICATIONS

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act requires that Congress receive prior notification of certain proposed arms sales as defined by that statute. Upon such notification, the Congress has 30 calendar days during which the sale may be reviewed. The provision stipulates that, in the Senate, the notification of proposed sales shall be sent

to the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In keeping with the committee's intention to see that relevant information is still available to the full Senate, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the notifications that have been received. If the cover letter references a classified annex, then such an annex is available to all Senators in the office of the Foreign Relations Committee, room SD-423.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY,
Washington, DC.

Hon. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended, we are forwarding herewith Transmittal No. 25-02, concerning the Air Force's proposed Letter(s) of Offer and Acceptance to the Republic of Korea for defense articles and services estimated to cost \$6.2 billion. We will issue a news release to notify the public of this proposed sale upon delivery of this letter to your office.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL F. MILLER,
Director.

Enclosures.

TRANSMITTAL NO. 25-02

Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer Pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended

(i) Prospective Purchaser: Republic of Korea.

(ii) Total Estimated Value:
Major Defense Equipment* \$2.6 billion.
Other \$3.6 billion.
Total \$6.2 billion.

(iii) Description and Quantity or Quantities of Articles or Services under Consideration for Purchase: The Republic of Korea has requested to buy equipment and services to upgrade its F-15K aircraft fleet, including: Major Defense Equipment (MDE): Ninety-six (96) Advanced Display Core Processor II (ADCP II) mission system computers.

Seventy (70) AN/APG-82(v)1 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radars.
Seventy (70) AN/ALQ-250 Eagle Passive Active Warning Survivability System (EPAWSS) electronic warfare (EW) suites.
Seventy (70) AN/AAR-57 Common Missile Warning Systems (CMWS).

Non-Major Defense Equipment: The following non-MDE items will also be included: Joint Mission Planning Systems (JMPS) with unique planning components; Computer Program Identification Numbers (CPINs); Joint Helmet Mounted Cueing Systems; major modifications and maintenance support; aircraft components, parts, and accessories; spare parts, consumables, accessories, and repair and return support; training aids and devices; weapons software and software support; classified and unclassified software delivery and support; classified and unclassified publications and technical documentation; personnel training and training equipment; aerial refueling support; aircraft ferry and transportation support; facilities and construction support; studies and surveys; U.S. Government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services; and other related elements of logistics and program support.

(iv) Military Department: Air Force (KS-D-QHE).