

spirit moved over the chaos of the deep, it brought a purifying wind over the formlessness and void of the Earth.

Lord, let there be light in our darkness. Where warfare continues to rage in Ukraine and where hostilities between Israel and Hamas threaten the fragility of life, in the civil wars in Africa and in urban violence in our own country, Lord, separate the light from the darkness. Speak Your purifying Word and bring order into the turmoil of our world.

You have laid the foundations of the Earth, determined its measurements, and rested it on the cornerstone of Your Word. As You have set the limits of the sea and commanded the proud waves to stop, restrain our surge for power. Demand of humanity the humility to serve You only and submit to Your will.

Look upon the work of our hands this day as we tend to the world You have entrusted to us. For You are the author of all creation, the one who made us. May we give You reason, when You look at Your handiwork, to call it good.

In Your sovereign name we pray.  
Amen.

#### THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House the approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

#### RECOGNIZING WELLSBORO ROTARY CLUB'S CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Wellsboro Rotary Club's centennial anniversary.

For a century, the Wellsboro Rotary Club provided unwavering, dedicated service to the community.

The men and women of the Wellsboro Rotary are guided by The Four-Way Test, which is as follows: Of the things we think, say, or do:

Is it the truth?

Is it fair to all concerned?

Will it build goodwill and better friendships?

Will it be beneficial to all concerned?

These guiding principles are the foundation of the Wellsboro Rotary Club's work, shaping a century of service that has left a mark on Wellsboro and the surrounding communities.

Their impact is evident, from recognizing outstanding students and supporting local charities to installing bicycle service stations and funding scholarships.

At its core, Rotary is about service above self. It is about bringing people together, regardless of background, to make the world a better place.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Wellsboro Rotary Club for its contributions to the community and congratulate these volunteers on 100 years of making a difference.

#### WE MUST CONTINUE TO SUPPORT UKRAINE

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

Mr. DAVIS of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I rise to voice my unwavering support for the people of Ukraine.

As Russia persists in its unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, it is crucial that we unite against Putin as defenders of freedom. By coming together, we can safeguard Ukraine's sovereignty and the future of democracy.

Ukrainians, demonstrating extraordinary resilience, have displayed unwavering courage on the front lines for nearly 3 years. I remain steadfast in supporting democracy, standing with Ukraine, and opposing all of the enemies of freedom around the world.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. FEDORCHAK). Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 6 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1600

#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. JOYCE of Pennsylvania) at 4 p.m.

#### 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.

#### ASSISTING SMALL BUSINESSES NOT FRAUDSTERS ACT

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 825) to prohibit individuals convicted of defrauding the Government from receiving any assistance from the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 825

*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 "Assisting Small Businesses Not Fraudsters Act".

#### SEC. 2. ASSISTANCE PROHIBITED AFTER FRAUD CONVICTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 16 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 645) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROHIBITION.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—An associate of a small business concern who is finally convicted of any crime involving or relating to financial misconduct or a false statement with respect to a covered loan or grant shall be ineligible to receive any financial assistance from the Administrator, other than financial assistance under section 7(b).

“(2) BUSINESS CONCERNS.—A small business concern that has as an associate an individual subject to paragraph (1) shall be ineligible to receive any financial assistance from the Administrator, other than financial assistance under section 7(b).

“(3) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) ASSOCIATE.—The term ‘associate’ means, with respect to a small business concern—

“(i) an officer, director, or owner of more than 20 percent of the equity of, or a key employee of, such small business concern;

“(ii) any entity not less than 20 percent owned or controlled by one or more individuals referred to in clause (i); and

“(iii) any other individual or entity in control of or controlled by such small business concern, except for a licensed small business investment company (as defined in section 103(3) of the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 (15 U.S.C. 662(3))).

“(B) COVERED LOAN OR GRANT.—The term ‘covered loan or grant’ means—

“(i) a loan made under—

“(I) paragraph (36) or (37) of subsection (a) of section 7; or

“(II) subsection (b) of such section in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; or

“(ii) a grant made under—

“(I) section 5003 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (15 U.S.C. 9009c); or

“(II) section 324 of the Economic Aid to Hard-Hit Small Businesses, Nonprofits, and Venues Act (15 U.S.C. 9009a).

“(C) FINALLY CONVICTED.—The term ‘finally convicted’ means, with respect to a person, that such person has been convicted of an offense and such conviction—

“(i) has not been appealed and is no longer appealable because the time for taking an appeal has expired; or

“(ii) has been appealed and the appeals process for such conviction is completed.”.

(b) APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (h) of section 16 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 645), as added by subsection (a) of this Act, shall not apply to any contract or other agreement entered into by the Government prior to the date of the enactment of 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. 825, the Assisting Small Businesses Not Fraudsters Act.

Mr. Speaker, SBA financial assistance programs are critical to entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, fraudsters infiltrated pandemic-era loans at an alarming rate. An estimated \$200 billion was stolen from honest, hard-working small businesses who needed help when they were forced to close their doors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The harm these fraudsters caused small businesses is devastating to see.

My bill creates accountability and ensures fraudsters are banned from receiving SBA resources for the rest of their lives. As chairman of the House Committee on Small Business, it is my duty to support America's small businesses, not fraudsters.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support prioritizing honest, hard-working entrepreneurs over those who defrauded the government, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here today as we debate the first set of Committee on Small Business bills. Our committee has a long tradition of putting politics aside to deliver for our Nation's small business employers.

Small businesses employ roughly half of the private workforce, create the majority of new jobs, drive innovation, and generate almost half of our Nation's economic activity. They are the heart and soul of our communities. Whether it is a neighborhood childcare center, or a bakery on Main Street, they are creating neighborhood jobs and reinvesting in the local economies.

More than 21 million small businesses were launched during the previous administration, with a vast majority of the applications being filed by women, including women of color. This is a clear indicator of positive growth and strong entrepreneurial activity, but more work needs to be done.

Today, we are considering seven bipartisan bills that will create additional opportunities for entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, my hope is that we can work together to conduct oversight of

the Trump administration's policies. I have been particularly troubled by the pauses in Federal funding to small businesses, inflationary tariffs, and Elon Musk's access to the SBA's HR, contract, and payment systems. I welcome the opportunity to look into these matters in a bipartisan way.

Mr. Speaker, turning to our first bill, H.R. 825 will prohibit anyone convicted of defrauding the government during the COVID-19 pandemic from receiving an SBA loan.

The Small Business Administration disbursed approximately \$1.2 trillion in economic aid during the pandemic. The vast majority of this aid served as a lifeline, helping to keep small businesses afloat during troubling and uncertain economic times.

Unfortunately, bad actors took advantage of the program early in the pandemic when SBA removed or weakened internal controls. Upon taking office, the Biden administration re-instituted longstanding antifraud controls and put new safeguards into place to curb the flow of pandemic dollars to fraudsters.

Before issuing a loan, the SBA would screen applicants on the government's Do Not Pay list and then check its internal database for fraudulent flags or holds. Borrowers had an opportunity to clear their names, but the SBA did not move forward until the holds were cleared.

The bill we are considering today has the same effect as the actions taken by the Biden administration, and it sends a strong message that SBA will not do business with anyone who defrauded the government.

Mr. Speaker, the single most important action that Congress can take to recover fraudulent pandemic funds is to fully fund the inspector general and give the office the resources it needs to go after the bad actors.

Former Representative LUETKEMEYER and I sponsored two bills, which became law, to extend the statute of limitations for fraud in the PPP and the EIDL program to 10 years. Without additional resources, the OIG will not be able to capitalize on these new laws, and American taxpayers will lose out.

In closing, I appreciate the bipartisan work of Chairman WILLIAMS, and Representatives Simon and Mfume.

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

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this important legislation will hold these fraudsters accountable, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SIMON).

Ms. SIMON. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member VELÁZQUEZ for this opportunity to speak. I thank Chairman WILLIAMS for working with me to introduce this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this effort to prioritize small

businesses in the future through funding opportunities by preventing pandemic fraudsters from accessing Federal small business funds.

Like other communities around the United States, in California's 12th District, small businesses are the lifeblood of our communities. Over 29,000 small businesses in our district bolster our region. These businesses struggled throughout the pandemic.

In Oakland's downtown, for instance, many of these institutions are fighting day in and day out just to stay afloat. I thank the Small Business Administration employees who work hard to support them.

These wonderful Federal employees have been connecting with small businesses in our district with emergency assistance, access to capital, advice on how to keep the doors open in the darkest times, how to pay their workers, and how to be strong servicemembers in our community. I have heard from many of these Federal workers who say they have been under assault by this current administration.

Just last month, I visited the Small Business Administration field office. Less than 2 hours after I left, two of those employees had received layoff notices.

Mr. Speaker, firing Federal employees in this moment does not decrease the need or importance of the agency; it just makes it harder for entrepreneurs, for restaurateurs, for childcare operators, and others to keep their employees paid, to keep their doors open, and to keep our downtowns thriving.

Every dollar that Congress gives to the Small Business Administration in this moment means the difference of a small business opening and employing folks or filing for bankruptcy.

The Small Business Administration has provided \$1.2 trillion, let me say that again, \$1.2 trillion in Paycheck Protection Program loans and other emergency assistance during the pandemic. As the ranking member has told us, unfortunately, there have been serious bad actors who took advantage of these funds, and those folks defrauded not only the government, but they defrauded the mom-and-pop shops on Main Street and, in my case, on Broadway.

Those dollars could have been used to create jobs, revitalize communities, and to help those businesses stay open and thrive. Instead, these fraudsters took advantage of the lax application screenings, which we believe may have resulted in them receiving at least 17 percent of the total Small Business Administration assistance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentlewoman from California.

Ms. SIMON. Mr. Speaker, the Biden administration has created new safeguards to reduce the potential for this fraud, but this legislation that is supported by our committee would build

on this effort, making convicted fraudsters ineligible for Federal small business assistance.

Mr. Speaker, as someone who has driven a payroll for over 30 years, I cannot express how important this legislation is at this moment. We love and support our small businesses with all that we have.

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

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. OLSZEWSKI).

Mr. OLSZEWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for yielding. I also thank the chairman for bringing this legislation forward along with my colleague from California (Ms. SIMON).

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Assisting Small Businesses Not Fraudsters Act, legislation that will help ensure that small businesses who need and deserve support get it, while cutting out fraudsters seeking to exploit vital relief programs.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They create jobs, they foster innovation, and they drive our local communities forward. They should be who we lift up and support, and they rightly are the beneficiaries of many Small Business Administration programs.

However, far too often, we have scammers taking advantage of these worthy programs. We saw this, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Paycheck Protection Program, Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program, and other relief funds were a lifeline for so many, but were also exploited by bad actors to the tune of an estimated \$36 billion.

This bill ensures that will no longer happen again. It protects taxpayer dollars, ensuring that they go where Congress intended: only to the legitimate small businesses of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for bringing this forward. Government efficiency is a good thing, but there is a right way to go about it and a legal way to go about it. This bill is a great example of a bipartisan way to go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I gladly rise in support of this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense legislation, 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. 825.

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. WILLIAMS of Texas. 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.

#### SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCACY IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2025

Mr. WILLIAMS of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 832) to clarify the primary functions and duties of the Office of Advocacy of the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 832

*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 Advocacy Improvements Act of 2025”.

#### SEC. 2. AMENDMENT TO PRIMARY FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES OF THE OFFICE OF ADVOCACY OF THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

(a) PRIMARY FUNCTIONS.—Section 202 of Public Law 94-305 (15 U.S.C. 634b) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting “and the international economy” after “economy”;

(2) in paragraph (9), by striking “complete” and inserting “compete”; and

(3) in paragraph (12), by striking “service-disabled” and inserting “service-disabled”.

(b) DUTIES.—Section 203(a) of Public Law 94-305 (15 U.S.C. 634c) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (5), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(7) represent the views and interests of small businesses before foreign governments and international entities for the purpose of contributing to regulatory and trade initiatives which may affect small businesses.”

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.

□ 1615

#### 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 my bill, H.R. 832, better known as the Small Business Advocacy Improvements Act.

I thank my colleagues, Representatives VAN DREW, TRAN, and

GOODLANDER, for joining me in support of this critical legislation.

By design, the SBA Office of Advocacy acts as the independent voice representing the views and interests of all small businesses within the Federal Government. This means calling attention to harmful regulations and inefficient rules preventing small businesses from competing for government contracts.

This legislation would clarify the functions and duties of the SBA Office of Advocacy when advocating for small businesses on the world stage, specifically when regulatory international trade initiatives are being developed.

Small business voices can easily be drowned out during these important conversations. This legislation fixes that problem by ensuring the views of Main Street are represented and heard before foreign governments and international entities.

My hope this Congress is that we can continue to look for bipartisan ways to make the SBA Office of Advocacy more effective in helping our American small businesses.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 832, the Small Business Advocacy Improvements Act of 2025.

The Office of Advocacy was established in 1976 to be an independent voice for small businesses within the Federal Government and is tasked with representing the views of small businesses before Congress, the White House, and other Federal agencies.

The office has regional advocates on the ground that provide outreach to small businesses, local chambers of commerce, and other associations to hear firsthand the concerns of small businesses. It works closely with Federal agencies to elevate these concerns throughout the rulemaking process.

Over the years, their work has saved small businesses billions in regulatory costs while still accomplishing the important goals of the regulations. However, their charter does not specifically state that they have the authority to represent the views and interests of small businesses before foreign governments and international entities.

As our economy has become increasingly more interconnected and more small businesses are tapping into international markets, it makes sense to give the office the authority to advocate on behalf of small businesses overseas.

The Office of Advocacy has proven to be a strong proponent for small businesses in the Federal Government and is well-poised to promote their views in the international regulatory arena.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. WILLIAMS, Mr. TRAN, Mr. VAN DREW, and Ms. GOODLANDER for their bipartisan work on this bill.

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