

So in the first instance, I would hope that they would make efforts to preclude the possibility that we would have targets that aren't authorized.

Secondly, my concern is that the other body likes to put us in a position where it's take it or leave it; in other words, without discussion in terms of the very substantive important discussion on how we protect ourselves against terrorists and protect the Constitution. We think those are very important questions on both sides, not that they're either side, but we believe they can be consistent with one another, but we think we need the time to do so.

That is why I pressed so hard, as the gentleman knows, to pass a FISA bill through this House. We passed a FISA bill through this House over a month ago. It was in November, so with clearly enough time to give the other body which had also considered a bill. And when we passed our bill, we already had bills out of the Intelligence Committee; and the Judiciary Committee bill, I'm not sure whether it was out of committee or not, but it had been considered in committee.

So I think it's unfortunate that we've been put in this time frame, but I frankly, without deciding the question today on the floor, am very interested in pursuing this in the regular order to discuss between the two Houses whether or not we can reach a resolution on this immunity issue which I think is an important one, as well as reaching a resolution on what I think is a much improved process that the House passed and, very frankly, which I think the Senate bill also has made some improvements on in the Judiciary Committee.

There are differences on that, whether the Senate Intelligence Committee is a preferable item, Senate Judiciary or some blend of those two, but they have not reached a resolution on that.

So I hope I have conveyed to the gentleman that while I understand the concern, which I share, of getting this done, I was not happy in August. I voted against the bill in August as the gentleman knows. An overwhelming majority of this caucus voted against that legislation. However, many people voted for it, justifiably in the sense that we needed to get something done for the interim and set a time limit on it so that we would not be vulnerable if, in fact, we were. But we think the FISA court needs to be involved in these issues.

So, again, what I'm trying to convey to you is these are very serious questions, and they need to be thoughtfully addressed, and I, for one, am very unenthusiastic about addressing these issues on the horn of hours to go before a bill expires.

I urge the Senate not to do that to us, and we are about to find ourselves in that position. I'm not happy about it.

Mr. BLUNT. Well, I hear my friend's displeasure. In August, I think 41 Mem-

bers of the majority joined with almost everyone on my side of the aisle to put the Protect America Act in place for this period of time that's about to expire.

The very fact that the Senate majority leader and others are calling for an extension leads me to believe that there is a reason to have something beyond the normal bill, the regular bill, that may or may not allow some listening to information we need to hear in the future because of what's been decided today.

Clearly, in my view at least, the Senate believes that an extension of the current law would be necessary to provide the current level of protection or they wouldn't be worried about the deadline. They'd take the gentleman's suggestion that maybe we have a year to listen to the things that we now know we need to listen to, and we shouldn't be rushed. I would not like to see the current law expire without an adequate replacement.

The goal the gentleman mentioned for the legislation, hearing those things we need to hear, and I'd paraphrase here, in the quickest possible time frame, is an appropriate goal. We'll continue to debate how we get there. I would hope that neither body allows this law to lapse with nothing to provide the level of protection the American people now have and in the future, and I yield.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for yielding.

In that context, can I ask the distinguished Republican whip whether or not, if we find ourselves in that position, whether you believe your side of the aisle would be prepared to support a 30-day extension so that we would not get into that position that you're concerned about, that if something came to light that the administration and/or NSA and the intelligence community felt ought to warrant action, that they would then be able to request such action during that additional 30 days while we see if both bodies can act?

Mr. BLUNT. I appreciate the question. I would think that if we find ourselves in that situation, at least I personally would want to look for the shortest period of time when we could reasonably reach a permanent solution to this. I don't think the country benefits from a constant debate on how we move forward on this issue. I think we need to find a permanent solution or at least a longer term solution than we've found to date, and I wouldn't want to see the law lapse.

I think we want to look at the circumstances at the time, what we were dealing with with legislation, and hopefully a conference of some kind and look at it at the time.

Mr. HOYER. If the gentleman would yield?

Mr. BLUNT. I'd yield.

Mr. HOYER. I think you raise an important concern. I think we all agree on the concern. I think also there are concerns about what the Congress did

in creating the FISA court, the purpose of the FISA court. The concern with respect to executive action on intercepting communications, certainly domestically, should be overseen by the court, and to the extent that there may be spillover from foreign interceptions to domestic interceptions, that ought to be of concern to us as well.

You are correct, these are very serious matters, and I would hope that they would be addressed as such from all perspectives.

What the 30-day extension does is, if the Senate, and I would suggest the Senate has not acted in a timely manner. You're going on your retreat. I'd like to get a better word than "retreat," but in any event, you're going on your retreat this week. We're doing the same next week. So essentially we have two legislative days left, and one of those, of course, is a 6:30 day, and the Senate says they're going to take this bill up Thursday. Let's assume they pass it on Thursday, which I don't assume. That gives us 1 day. The Senate knows our schedule. That is not fair to the Members of this House. It's not fair to the country. It's not fair to the Constitution.

And so I would hope that if we find ourselves in that position, as I think we do, that we could agree to preclude the fear that you have and give another 30 days for the process to work, for us to go to conference if the Senate has passed a bill, to go to conference, and hopefully the Senate will go to conference. The Senate hasn't been very inclined to go to conference. We're not pleased with that. I don't think you're pleased with that.

Mr. BLUNT. We're not pleased either.

Mr. HOYER. We share that in common, and I think we're in that position, that a 30-day extension is a reasonable time in which to give the Congress of the United States, Senate and the House, to try to come together, resolve some very serious issues on which there are differences of opinion, and I thank the gentleman for the time.

Mr. BLUNT. I thank the gentleman for that, and I don't intend to spend any time defending the time of the working schedule of the Senate.

PROVIDING FOR A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS TO RECEIVE A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I send to the desk a privileged concurrent resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the concurrent resolution, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 282

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the two Houses of Congress assemble in the Hall of the House of Representatives on Monday, January 28, 2008, at 9 p.m., for the purpose of receiving such communication as the President of the United States shall be pleased to make to them.

The concurrent resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HILL). 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 on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

SECTION 515 RURAL HOUSING
PROPERTY TRANSFER IMPROVE-
MENT ACT OF 2007

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3873) to expedite the transfer of ownership of rural multifamily housing projects with loans made or insured under section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 so that such projects are rehabilitated and preserved for use for affordable housing.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3873

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 "Section 515 Rural Housing Property Transfer Improvement Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) providing rural housing for poor families in the United States has been an important goal, and the primary reason for enactment, of the Housing Act of 1949;

(2) rural multifamily housing financed under the section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949 has been an essential resource for providing affordable housing for some of the Nation's poorest families;

(3) the majority of the approximately 16,000 projects financed under section 515 that currently have loans outstanding were constructed more than 25 years ago and need new financing in order to continue to provide decent, affordable housing for families eligible to reside in such housing;

(4) many owners of such projects are working to transfer the properties, which often involves leveraging Federal resources with private and commercial resources; and

(5) the Secretary of Agriculture should protect the portfolio of section 515 projects by making administrative and procedural changes to process ownership transfers in a commercially reasonable time and manner when such transfers will further the preservation of such projects for use as affordable housing for families eligible to reside in such housing.

SEC. 3. TRANSFERS OF SECTION 515 RURAL MULTIFAMILY HOUSING PROJECTS.

Section 515(h) of the Housing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1485) is amended—

(1) by inserting "(1) CONDITION.—" after "(h)"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

"(2) TRANSFERS FOR PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION OF PROJECTS.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make such administrative and procedural

changes as may be necessary to expedite the approval of applications to transfer ownership of projects for which a loan is made or insured under this section for the preservation, continued use restriction, and rehabilitation of such projects. Such changes may include changing approval procedures, increasing staff and resources, improving outreach to project sponsors regarding information that is required to be submitted for such approvals, changing approval authority between national offices and the State and local offices, simplifying approval requirements, establishing uniformity of transfer requirements among State offices, and any other actions which would expedite approvals.

"(B) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall consult with the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and take such actions as are appropriate in conjunction with such consultation, to simplify the coordination of rules, regulations, forms (including applications for transfers of project ownership), and approval requirements for housing projects for which assistance is provided by the Secretary of Agriculture and under any low-income housing tax credits under section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or tax-exempt housing bonds. The Secretary of Agriculture shall involve the State Rural Development offices of Department of Agriculture and the Administrator of the Rural Housing Service in the consultations under this subparagraph as the Secretary considers appropriate.

"(C) PRESERVATION AND REHABILITATION.—The Secretary shall actively facilitate transfers of the ownership of projects that will result in the preservation, continued use restriction, and rehabilitation of such projects.

"(D) FINAL AUTHORITY OVER TRANSFERS.—The Office of Rental Housing Preservation of the Rural Housing Service, established under section 537 (42 U.S.C. 1490p-1), shall have final regulatory authority over all transfers of properties for which a loan is made or insured under this section, and such Office may, with respect to such transfers, work with and seek recommendations from the State Rural Development offices of the Department of Agriculture.

"(E) DEADLINES FOR PROCESSING OF TRANSFER APPLICATIONS.—

"(i) PROCEDURE.—If a complete application, as determined by the Secretary, for a transfer of ownership of a project or projects is not processed, and approved or denied, by the State Rural Development office to which it is submitted before the applicable deadline under clause (ii)—

"(I) such State or local office shall not have any further authority to approve or deny the application;

"(II) such State or local office shall transfer the application in accordance with subclause (III); and

"(III) such application shall be processed, and approved or denied, in accordance with clause (iii) and only by the Office of Rental Housing Preservation, which may make the final determination with the assistance of other Rural Development employees.

"(ii) DEADLINE FOR STATE AND LOCAL OFFICES.—The applicable deadline under this clause for processing, and approval or denial, of a complete application for transfer of ownership of a project, or projects, shall be the period that begins upon receipt of the complete application by the State Rural Development office to which it is submitted and consists of—

"(I) in the case of an application for transfer of ownership of a single project, 45 days;

"(II) in the case of an application for transfer of ownership of multiple projects, but not exceeding 10 projects, 90 days; and

"(III) in the case of an application for transfer of ownership of 11 or more projects, 120 days.

"(iii) DEADLINE FOR OFFICE OF RENTAL HOUSING PRESERVATION.—In the case of any complete application for a transfer of ownership of a project, or projects, that is transferred pursuant to clause (i), shall be processed, and approved or denied, before the expiration of the period that begins upon receipt of the complete application and consists of—

"(I) in the case of an application for transfer of ownership of a single project, 30 days;

"(II) in the case of an application for transfer of ownership of multiple projects, but not exceeding 10 projects, 60 days; and

"(III) in the case of an application for transfer of ownership of 11 or more projects, 120 days.

"(iv) APPEALS.—Only decisions regarding complete applications shall be appealable to the National Appeals Division of the Department of Agriculture."

SEC. 4. REPORT.

Not later than July 1, 2008, the Secretary of Agriculture shall submit a report to the Committee on Financial Services of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs of the Senate that—

(1) identifies the actions that the Secretary has taken to coordinate with other Federal agencies, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Internal Revenue Service, and, in particular, with the program for rental assistance under section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, the multifamily mortgage insurance programs under title II of the National Housing Act, the program under section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for low-income housing tax credits, and the program for tax-exempt bonds under section 142 of such Code;

(2) identifies and describes any resulting improvements within Rural Housing Service of the Department of Agriculture in expediting the transfer of ownership of projects with loans made or insured under section 515 of the Housing Act of 1949; and

(3) makes recommendations for any legislative changes that are needed for the prompt processing of applications for such ownership transfers and for the transfer of such projects.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Hampshire (Mr. HODES) and the gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Hampshire.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and to insert extraneous material thereon.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HODES. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself so much time as I may consume. I rise today in support of H.R. 3873.

Mr. Speaker, rural poverty is a particularly harsh brand of indigence. It tends to be more extreme than urban poverty, and because it develops in areas far from television cameras and