

the preservation and protection of the values and resources of Independence National Historical Park.

(g) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AGREEMENT.—The term "Agreement" means an agreement under this section between the Secretary and the Corporation.

(2) CENTER.—The term "Center" means a Gateway Visitor Center constructed and operated in accordance with the Agreement.

(3) CORPORATION.—The term "Corporation" means the Gateway Visitor Center Corporation (a nonprofit corporation established under the laws of the State of Pennsylvania).

(4) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) and the gentleman from Puerto Rico (Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS).

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

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 449 was introduced by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BORSKI). Mr. BORSKI has worked hard on this bill which will greatly enhance the visitor experience at Independence National Historical Park.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 449 is a non-controversial and bipartisan bill that would authorize the Gateway Visitor Center at Independence National Historical Park. This bill authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a cooperative agreement with the Gateway Visitor Center Corporation to construct and operate a regional visitor center on Independence Mall. The center would provide information, interpretation, facilities and services for visitors to Independence National Historical Park, its surrounding historical sites and the City of Philadelphia.

Mr. Speaker, private and public funds will be used to develop the visitor center on National Park property, and it is my understanding that approximately \$30 million of private funds have already been raised and this project is ready to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, this is a great example of how we can incorporate private enterprise to improve our parks and the experience for our visitors. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 449.

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

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 449 would authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into a cooperative agreement with the nonprofit Gateway Visitor Center Corporation to construct and operate a regional visitor center on National Park Service land within Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia. Hearings were held on an identical bill, on H.R. 4109, last Congress, and that bill was favorably reported by the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands. Further

action was not taken on the measure prior to adjourning.

Unlike the situation at Gettysburg National Military Park, which is considered controversial by many, this proposal is supported by all involved parties. The proposed visitor center is consistent with the general management plan for the park and has the backing of the NPS, the City of Philadelphia and other interested parties.

As such, we have no objection to the legislation, and we beseech our colleagues to vote for this legislation.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 449 and ask for all Members to support this legislation. I would like to commend my good friend, Mr. BORSKI, for introducing this bill and would like to thank him for his hard work to bring it to the floor. I would also like to thank Chairman HANSEN, Ranking Member ROMERO-BARCELÓ, Chairman YOUNG and Ranking Member MILLER for all their help in bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, Independence Mall is not only the cornerstone of Philadelphia, it is the cornerstone of democracy. On any day, you can walk down to Independence Mall and find hundreds of tourists and schoolchildren visiting the birthplace of the United States. Each year, more than 3 million people visit the place where we declared our independence and forged a nation based on individual rights.

But the current visitor facilities at Independence Mall are not adequate for this many tourists. Mr. Speaker, it is important that we not only preserve our heritage, but that we keep it accessible to everyone. This bill authorizes the construction of a new Gateway Visitor Center, located at Independence National Historical Park, to provide tourists a convenient, informative and enjoyable visit to the park and the City of Philadelphia. Through exhibits and displays, the Center will not only provide an interpretive presentation on the significance of the Independence National Historical Park, but will also provide information on other historical and cultural attractions throughout Philadelphia.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not only important to Philadelphia, but to the entire nation as it will keep the site of our independence and the birthplace of democracy easily accessible to everyone. It is a needed addition to the Independence Mall area and will serve our country well in to the next century by preserving and enhancing this national treasure. I urge a unanimous vote on H.R. 449.

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 449, a bill to authorize the Gateway Visitors Center at Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.

Every year nearly 5 million visitors come to Philadelphia and Independence National Historical Park to visit and learn about the beginnings of this great country and the founding of democracy. I am proud to represent a portion of the Park which many consider the crown jewel of the National Park Service. We must do all we can to preserve the area which houses the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall and is the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States.

Independence National Historical Park is currently the subject of a major renovation project to preserve the park for future genera-

tions. Federal, state, and local leaders are working in unison to address the ongoing needs of the Park, ensuring its greatness as an American institution and historical area. The Park Service's completed General Management Plan documents the vision for the future of the park, and the Gateway Visitors Center is an integral part of this plan.

H.R. 449 is imperative to the renovation of the Park included in the National Park's General Management Plan. It is extremely important to Philadelphia and for those who visit the historical area and experience its significance in the development of this nation. The present location of the visitors center is situated in an area with limited public transit access and on a narrow street. The location for the proposed Gateway Visitors Center will preserve history while at the same time improving access and creating a new entrance to the Park. The Gateway Visitors Center would serve as the region's principal point of orientation by providing a range of exceptional services and programs, attracting visitors to the resources offered in and beyond the park.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my colleagues from Pennsylvania who have worked so hard to see this legislation come to fruition. Independence National Historical Park houses two of our nations most prized objects, Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. This bill is vital to the preservation of these treasured artifacts that represent the ideas upon which our nation was founded, and is the key to our nation's history for millions of Americans.

Mr. ROMERO-BARCELÓ. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. GIBBONS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 449.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on H.R. 15, H.R. 154 and H.R. 449, the bills just passed.

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

There was no objection.

AUTHORIZING ESTABLISHMENT OF DISASTER MITIGATION PILOT PROGRAM IN THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 388) to authorize the establishment of a disaster mitigation pilot program in the Small Business Administration.

The Clerk read as follows: