

may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials in the RECORD on the three bills just considered, H.R. 3937, H.R. 3786, and H.R. 3858.

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

There was no objection.

PROVIDING FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION OF FOREST SERVICE FIREFIGHTER DEATHS CAUSED BY WILDFIRE ENTRAPMENT OR BURNOVER

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3971) to provide for an independent investigation of Forest Service firefighter deaths that are caused by wildfire entrapment or burnover.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3971

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE INSPECTOR GENERAL INVESTIGATION OF FOREST SERVICE FIREFIGHTER DEATHS.

(a) INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION.—In the case of each fatality of an officer or employee of the Forest Service that occurs due to wildfire entrapment or burnover, the Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture shall conduct an investigation of the fatality. The investigation shall not rely on, and shall be completely independent of, any investigation of the fatality that is conducted by the Forest Service.

(b) SUBMISSION OF RESULTS.—As soon as possible after completing an investigation under subsection (a), the Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture shall submit to Congress and the Secretary of Agriculture a report containing the results of the investigation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE).

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise today in support of H.R. 3971, introduced by my colleague, the gentleman from Washington State (Mr. HASTINGS), to provide for an independent investigation of Forest Service firefighter deaths that are caused by wildfire entrapment or burnover.

Today, as we debate this issue, large wildfires are burning across the country. Over 1.4 million acres have already been consumed, and the worst may be yet to come. The devastating fires that are burning right now warrant the passage of this legislation. This bill provides for a thorough and unbiased investigation of firefighter fatalities by an independent source.

Firefighting is an inherently dangerous job, and we should do what we can to reduce the risks. I believe the main purpose for this legislation is to prevent future deaths from occurring.

However, it is important to remember that the most effective way to prevent firefighter fatalities is to prevent catastrophic wildfires from occurring in the first place.

Our Nation's forests are in desperate need of good management to restore them to a state where they can endure natural low-intensity wildfires, wildfires that are more predictable and, therefore, safer for firefighters and communities by preventing the extreme and erratic behavior that makes fighting fires so dangerous. It is very simple logic. The best way to prevent firefighter deaths is to prevent catastrophic wildfires.

Due to past instances and the fires currently burning across the Nation, I believe this bill provides another tool for the well-being of firefighters. In so doing, I hope that we will not lose focus on the more important point of preventing wildfires through the healthy management of our forest land.

This legislation is important and strives to ensure mistakes causing deaths are not made twice. It ensures our Nation's commitment to the safety of firefighters. The integrity for investigations of firefighter deaths should not be jeopardized, and by passing this legislation we move to address the issue of creating safer environments for firefighters by preventing catastrophic wildfires.

I urge the Members of this body to join me in taking this important step today. By passing H.R. 3971, we can renew the efforts for firefighter protection and move on to ultimate safeguards for firefighters, which are the management of healthy forests and the prevention of catastrophic wildfires.

I congratulate the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) for his introduction of this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to join me in declaring a strong complement to the safety of firefighters.

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

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

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3971; and I want to commend the sponsors of this legislation, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT), the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DUNN), but also on our side the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE), the gentleman from Washington (Mr. DICKS), and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) for introducing this bill.

I think it is important, especially as we look at the fires that are raging in the West today, that we provide for an investigation of any deaths that might occur, as well as the deaths that oc-

curred last year. So I am pleased to stand here in support of this legislation.

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

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Washington State (Mr. HASTINGS), the author of the legislation.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Virginia for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, the massive wildfires burning out of control in Arizona today are on the front pages of newspapers all across America reminding people in other parts of the country of the enormous threat these dangerous fires pose to both lives and property.

Westerners, however, need no such reminders because we live with the destructive power of wildfires year in and year out. At this time each summer, as the fire season gets under way, thousands of men and women strap on their gear and head out to fire lines seeking to contain one of the most destructive natural forces known to man.

Fighting wildfires is dirty, dangerous, and, at times, terrifying work. Those who do it face risks most of us can hardly imagine. They do so knowing that with first-rate training, equipment, and leadership, their efforts will help protect the lives and property of those caught in the path of raging wildfires.

Often, firefighters are injured in the line of duty. Sometimes, tragically, lives are lost on the fire line. In some cases, the cause is beyond anyone's control, other times mistakes are made. And mistakes will inevitably be made in these situations, which are so extraordinarily challenging to both the mind and the body.

Each time tragedy strikes in this way, it is only natural to seek to understand precisely what happened and why. Mr. Speaker, that desire is at the heart of this legislation before us today. Last summer, in my district, four young firefighters lost their lives fighting a fire known as the Thirty Mile Fire in Okanogan County. They were Tom Craven, Karen Fitzpatrick, Jessica Johnson, and Devin Weaver.

To most Americans, the people they see fighting wildfires in the news reports are just figures on their TV screens, and that is, of course, understandable. But to those of us in the West, those men and women are our neighbors and our friends; and it is natural for us to want to do all we can to protect those who risk so much protecting us. One of the best ways to protect lives in the future is to fully understand what caused the lost lives in the first place. That must be the unquestioned top priority of the Federal firefighting officials in the aftermath of any lethal wildfire.

My bill, H.R. 3971, is to ensure that that is done. This legislation requires

the Inspector General of the Department of Agriculture to conduct an investigation in the deaths of any firefighters killed by wildfire. This investigation is separate and independent of any Forest Service internal review. An independent examination of what went wrong will help provide information on how similar events can be prevented in the future and how firefighters can better be prepared and protected and how lives can be saved. Independent investigations will also help to ensure oversight and accountability in the Forest Service.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation may not benefit the families in my district that have endured the tragic loss of their loved ones; yet I am confident that they, more than anyone, understand the value of requiring independent investigations in the future. Should such a tragedy occur again, everyone concerned will have more confidence and faith in an independent investigation than an internal agency review.

It is the hope that no firefighter will lose their life battling a wildfire; yet we should pass this bill to make certain that if there is a loss of life, that tragedy will be independently investigated to identify what happened, why it happened, and how it can be prevented in the future.

□ 1430

In addition, no matter how much we improve the quality of investigations, it is vital that we take the necessary steps to improve forest health through reponsible forest management practices. We have already seen too many devastating fires in the West this year that have caused terrible damage and harm to property and families.

Congress must act to address forest health and management practices. Regrettably, for too long this has not been a priority of the Federal Government. This "hands-off approach" has contributed to the devastation we see today in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, indeed throughout the West. Effective forest management is vital to removing the root causes of forest fires.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Senator MARIA CANTWELL for her leadership in the other body. She has introduced companion legislation and has tirelessly worked to ensure that this legislation becomes law. The goal of H.R. 3971 is simple and straightforward: Ensuring independent investigations to improve firefighting safety. I urge Members to support H.R. 3971.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAN MILLER of Florida). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3971.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. GOODLATTE. 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 and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 3971.

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

There was no objection.

RECESS

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

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 33 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

□ 1802

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ISAKSON) at 6:00 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.

NEW RIVER GORGE BOUNDARY ACT OF 2002

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will now resume proceedings on the question of suspending the rules and passing the bill, H.R. 3858.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CANNON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3858.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The remaining votes on postponed questions will be resumed later this evening.

CONGRATULATING NAVY LEAGUE OF UNITED STATES ON ITS CENTENNIAL

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 416) congratulating the Navy League of United States on the occasion of the centennial of the organization's founding.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 416

Whereas the Navy League of the United States was founded in 1902 with the encouragement of President Theodore Roosevelt to serve and support the United States sea services, namely the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marine;

Whereas the Navy League has more than 77,000 active members;

Whereas the Navy League is unique among military-oriented associations in that it is a civilian organization dedicated to the education of American citizens and the support of the members of the sea services and their families;

Whereas the Navy League supports active duty members of the sea services through the adoption of naval vessels, installations, and units and the hosting of commissioning ceremonies, award programs, and other recognition programs;

Whereas the Navy League supports America's young people through its youth programs, including sponsorship of the Naval Sea Cadet Corps and the Navy League Scholarship Program, and through its promotion of youth-oriented activities in local communities, such as the Reserve Officers' Training Corps and other recognized youth programs;

Whereas the Navy League is widely respected by citizens, community and industry leaders, and public officials; and

Whereas Navy League programs are welcomed in communities throughout the United States, and members of the Navy League are recognized for their integrity and patriotism: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress, on the occasion of the centennial of the founding of the Navy League of the United States in 1902, congratulates the Navy League and its members for their role as the foremost civilian organization dedicated to supporting the United States sea services.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCHROCK) and the gentleman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCHROCK).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 416.

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise today to encourage my colleagues to join me in honoring the Navy League of the United States for its 100 years of service to service members, their families and their communities. I recently introduced House Resolution 416 to congratulate the Navy League on its 100th anniversary, its 100th year of service to America. The Navy League of the United States was founded in 1902 with the encouragement of then-President Theodore Roosevelt.

The Navy League is unique among military-oriented associations. It is a civilian organization dedicated to the education of our citizens and the support of the men and women of the sea