

with information and advice about obtaining vocational rehabilitation and employment services.

The Subcommittee on Social Security has received extensive testimony from disability advocates, experts, and other stakeholders about the importance of these programs to increasing employment among disability beneficiaries.

SSA is currently authorized to spend \$23 million annually from its administrative budget to fund the WIPA program, and \$7 million annually to fund the PABSS program. However, the authorization for both programs expires on September 30, 2009.

This bill will extend the WIPA and PABSS programs for one year, with no changes, while the Committee considers a longer-term reauthorization. This 1-year extension will ensure that these programs can continue to provide disability beneficiaries with the assistance they need to seek employment. The bill does not increase government spending.

I urge your support for extending these important programs.

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

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of passage of this important legislation and thank Mr. TANNER for bringing it up. He is doing a great job as the Social Security chairman.

You know, choosing to work shouldn't be a hard decision to make for someone receiving Supplemental Security, because they are Social Security disability benefits. But it is, and that is because the folks have to think about how their wages will impact their cash benefits or their access to health care.

With nearly unanimous support from both the House and Senate, almost 10 years ago Congress passed Ticket to Work and the Work Incentives Improvement Act, a law that was about helping those with disabilities to get back to work in order to support themselves and their families. The two grant programs we would reauthorize today were created as a part of that landmark legislation.

The Work Incentives Planning Assistance program funds community-based organizations to assist those receiving benefits to understand Social Security's complex rules and the effect of working on their benefits. Today, there are over 104 community-based cooperative agreements to ensure these services are available in all 50 States. Since the program began, over 350,000 people have been served.

One example is the Work Incentive Planning Assistance program of Easter Seals in north Texas, which serves 19 counties in the north Texas area, including my district. Thanks to their good work over the past 3 years, their staff experts have served 1,302 people, and 184 of them now still have jobs.

The Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security program funds 57 grant programs covering all 50 States. These programs served al-

most 2,500 people last year and helped those working or trying to work by responding to their questions and resolving potential disputes with their employer or with an agency providing them with return-to-work services.

The authorized funding level of \$30 million has remained constant since these programs were created. Should Congress not act, these programs would expire on September 30, 2009, and the funding would end.

While I support a 1-year extension of these two important programs, at a Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security hearing, we learned that Social Security's primary return-to-work program, Ticket to Work, really hasn't been working. Fortunately, we are beginning to see promising signs of success in the Ticket program since new regulations to fix it were implemented last summer.

Now, more than ever, how every taxpayer dollar is spent does matter. Programs that don't achieve results must be changed or must end. To that end, I look forward to working with Chairman Tanner and all the members of the committee to figure out how all return-to-work programs can achieve their goal of a job and self-sufficiency for those who choose to return to work. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. JOHNSON.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3325.

The Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program and the Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security program play crucial roles in the lives of SSA's beneficiaries with disabilities.

The two programs enable these beneficiaries to make informed choices about work as well as providing them with the necessary services to successfully transition back into the workforce.

For instance, the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Program helps guide them by providing important information about opportunities and resources that help them make an informed decision.

Importantly, these programs provide services, free of charge, to individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income.

A one year reauthorization will ensure that these vulnerable Americans may continue to receive guidance, support, and legal representation.

At a time of increased economic hardship across the country, it is vitally important that we not forget those most in need.

H.R. 3325 has strong bi-partisan support, as it should, and deserves overwhelming support when we vote in order to send a message to SSA beneficiaries with disabilities that they are not forgotten and we stand by their side.

Mr. TANNER. I have no other speakers and yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3325.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS BUSINESS CENTER ACT OF 2009

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1803) to amend the Small Business Act to establish a Veterans Business Center program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1803

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 "Veterans Business Center Act of 2009".

SEC. 2. VETERANS BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.

Section 32 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b) is amended—

(1) in subsection (f), by inserting "(other than subsections (g), (h), and (i))" after "this section"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(g) VETERANS BUSINESS CENTER PROGRAM.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish a Veterans Business Center program within the Administration to provide entrepreneurial training and counseling to veterans in accordance with this subsection.

"(2) DIRECTOR.—The Administrator shall appoint a Director of the Veterans Business Center program, who shall implement and oversee such program and who shall report directly to the Associate Administrator for Veterans Business Development.

"(3) DESIGNATION OF VETERANS BUSINESS CENTERS.—The Director shall establish by regulation an application, review, and notification process to designate entities as veterans business centers for purposes of this section. The Director shall make publicly known the designation of an entity as a veterans business center and the award of a grant to such center under this subsection.

"(4) FUNDING FOR VETERANS BUSINESS CENTERS.—

"(A) INITIAL GRANTS.—The Director is authorized to make a grant (hereinafter in this subsection referred to as an 'initial grant') to each veterans business center each year for not more than 5 years in the amount of \$200,000.

"(B) GROWTH FUNDING GRANTS.—After a veterans business center has received 5 years of initial grants under subparagraph (A), the Director is authorized to make a grant (hereinafter in this subsection referred to as a 'growth funding grant') to such center each year for not more than 3 years in the amount of \$150,000. After such center has received 3 years of growth funding grants, the Director shall require such center to meet performance benchmarks established by the Director to be eligible for growth funding grants in subsequent years.

"(5) CENTER RESPONSIBILITIES.—Each veterans business center receiving a grant under this subsection shall use the funds primarily on veteran entrepreneurial development, counseling of veteran-owned small businesses through one-on-one instruction and classes, and providing government procurement assistance to veterans.

"(6) MATCHING FUNDS.—Each veterans business center receiving a grant under this subsection shall be required to provide a non-

Federal match of 50 percent of the Federal funds such center receives under this subsection. The Director may issue to a veterans business center, upon request, a waiver from all or a portion of such matching requirement upon a determination of hardship. The Director may waive the matching funds requirement under this paragraph with respect to veterans business centers that serve communities with a per capita income less than 75 percent of the national per capita income and an unemployment rate at least 150 percent higher than the national average.

“(7) TARGETED AREAS.—The Director shall give priority to applications for designations and grants under this subsection that will establish a veterans business center in a geographic area, as determined by the Director, that is not currently served by a veterans business center and in which—

“(A) the population of veterans exceeds the national median of such measure; or

“(B) the population of veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom exceeds the national median of such measure.

“(8) TRAINING PROGRAM.—The Director shall develop and implement, directly or by contract, an annual training program for the staff and personnel of designated veterans business centers to provide education, support, and information on best practices with respect to the establishment and operation of such centers. The Director shall develop such training program in consultation with veterans business centers, the interagency task force established under subsection (c), and veterans service organizations.

“(9) INCLUSION OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN PROGRAM.—Upon the date of the enactment of this subsection, each Veterans Business Outreach Center established by the Administrator under the authority of section 8(b)(17) and each center that received funds during fiscal year 2006 from the National Veterans Business Development Corporation established under section 33 and that remains in operation shall be treated as designated as a veterans business center for purposes of this subsection and shall be eligible for grants under this subsection.

“(10) RURAL AREAS.—The Director shall submit annually to the Administrator a report on whether a sufficient percentage, as determined by the Director, of veterans in rural areas have adequate access to a veterans business center. If the Director submits a report under this paragraph that does not demonstrate that a sufficient percentage of veterans in rural areas have adequate access to a veterans business center, the Director shall give priority during the 1-year period following the date of the submission of such report to applications for designations and grants under this subsection that will establish veterans business centers in rural areas.

“(11) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subsection \$12,000,000 for fiscal year 2010 and \$14,000,000 for fiscal year 2011.

“(h) ADDITIONAL GRANTS AVAILABLE TO VETERANS BUSINESS CENTERS.—

“(1) ACCESS TO CAPITAL GRANT PROGRAM.—“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Veterans Business Center program shall establish a grant program under which the Director is authorized to make, to veterans business centers designated under subsection (g), grants for the following:

“(i) Developing specialized programs to assist veteran-owned small businesses to secure capital and repair damaged credit.

“(ii) Providing informational seminars on securing loans to veteran-owned small businesses.

“(iii) Providing one-on-one counseling to veteran-owned small businesses to improve

the financial presentations of such businesses to lenders.

“(iv) Facilitating the access of veteran-owned small businesses to both traditional and non-traditional financing sources.

“(v) Providing one-on-one or group counseling to owners of small business concerns who are members of the reserve components of the armed forces, as specified in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code, to assist such owners to effectively prepare their small businesses for periods when such owners are deployed in support of a contingency operation.

“(vi) Developing specialized programs to assist unemployed veterans to become entrepreneurs.

“(B) AWARD SIZE.—The Director may not award a veterans business center more than \$75,000 in grants under this paragraph.

“(C) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this paragraph \$1,500,000 for each of fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

“(2) PROCUREMENT ASSISTANCE GRANT PROGRAM.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall establish a grant program under which the Director is authorized to make, to veterans business centers designated under subsection (g), grants for the following:

“(i) Assisting veteran-owned small businesses to identify contracts that are suitable to such businesses.

“(ii) Preparing veteran-owned small businesses to be ready as subcontractors and prime contractors for contracts made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-5) through training and business advisement, particularly with respect to the construction trades.

“(iii) Providing veteran-owned small businesses technical assistance with respect to the Federal procurement process, including assisting such businesses to comply with Federal regulations and bonding requirements.

“(B) AWARD SIZE.—The Director may not award a veterans business center more than \$75,000 in grants under this paragraph.

“(C) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this paragraph \$1,500,000 for each of fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

“(3) SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED SMALL BUSINESS GRANT PROGRAM.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall establish a grant program under which the Director is authorized to make, to veterans business centers designated under subsection (g), grants for the following:

“(i) Developing outreach programs for service-disabled veterans to promote self-employment opportunities.

“(ii) Providing training to service-disabled veterans with respect to business plan development, marketing, budgeting, accounting, and merchandising.

“(iii) Assisting service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses to locate and secure business opportunities.

“(B) AWARD SIZE.—The Director may not award a veterans business center more than \$75,000 in grants under this paragraph.

“(C) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this paragraph \$1,500,000 for each of fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

“(i) VETERANS ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Veterans Business Center program is authorized to carry out an event, once every two years, for the purpose of providing networking opportunities, outreach, education, training, and support to veterans business centers funded under this section, veteran-owned

small businesses, veterans service organizations, and other entities as determined appropriate for inclusion by the Director. Such event shall include education and training with respect to improving outreach to veterans in areas of high unemployment.

“(2) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this subsection \$450,000 for fiscal years 2010 and 2011.

“(j) INCLUSION OF SURVIVING SPOUSES.—For purposes of subsections (g), (h), and (i) the following apply:

“(1) The term ‘veteran’ includes a surviving spouse of the following:

“(A) A member of the Armed Forces, including a reserve component thereof.

“(B) A veteran.

“(2) The term ‘veteran-owned small business’ includes a small business owned by a surviving spouse of the following:

“(A) A member of the Armed Forces, including a reserve component thereof.

“(B) A veteran.

“(k) INCLUSION OF RESERVE COMPONENTS.—For purposes of subsections (g), (h), and (i) the following apply:

“(1) The term ‘veteran’ includes a member of the reserve components of the armed forces as specified in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code.

“(2) The term ‘veteran-owned small business’ includes a small business owned by a member of the reserve components of the armed forces as specified in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code.”

SEC. 3. REPORTING REQUIREMENT FOR INTER-AGENCY TASK FORCE.

Section 32(c) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(4) REPORT.—The Administrator shall submit to Congress biannually a report on the appointments made to and activities of the task force.”

SEC. 4. COMPTROLLER GENERAL STUDY OF SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS OWNED AND CONTROLLED BY VETERANS.

The Comptroller General shall carry out a study on the effects of this Act and the amendments made by this Act on small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans and submit to Congress a report on the results of such study. Such report shall include the recommendations of the Comptroller General with respect to how this Act and the amendments made by this Act may be implemented to more effectively serve small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, as a new generation of heroes returns home from the conflicts

in Iraq and Afghanistan, our Nation has a responsibility to ensure that they can earn a decent living for themselves and their families.

When they reenter civilian life, many of our returning soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines will be interested in launching their own businesses. This is not surprising. After all, the attributes it takes to lead a successful business, like perseverance, leadership and strategic thinking, are the same skills that make members of our military effective.

Already veterans comprise 14 percent of self-employed Americans. With more veterans returning home from Iraq every day, we can only expect the number of self-employed veterans to spike in coming months.

The bill before us today is meant to make specialized services available to veterans so that they can succeed as small business owners. Under this bill, the Small Business Administration is instructed to establish a new Veterans Business Center program. This program will provide veterans with dedicated counseling and business training.

There is already an existing Veterans Business Outreach Center initiative at the Small Business Administration, and while that program is limited in its scope, it has already demonstrated that veterans can succeed in business if they have the right tools.

Importantly, under this bill, for the first time we will have a dedicated network of entrepreneurial development centers that are designed specifically with veterans' needs in mind.

In addition to building on the success of the existing Veterans Business program, this legislation will tackle some of the most difficult challenges blocking veterans from becoming entrepreneurs. Given the ongoing credit crunch, there are specific measures in this bill to help veterans access capital and ensure loans.

H.R. 1803 also helps veterans find Federal contracts that are well-suited for veteran-owned businesses. This is a particularly timely program, given the wave of contracts that will be generated from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Equally important, this bill makes clear that as the SBA activates the new network of Veterans Business Centers, it should look first to those areas of the country with large veterans populations. In short, we are bringing small business resources that veterans need to the communities with the most veterans.

Mr. Speaker, all of us owe a debt to the men and women who wear our Nation's uniform in defense of our country. While we can never fully repay that debt, we can help our veterans reenter civilian life and pursue the American Dream.

The legislation before the House today will help our returning heroes find their piece of the American Dream by launching and building their own businesses. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 1803, the Veterans Business Center Act of 2009. Today's current economic climate provides a hard path to success. While it has never been easy for small business owners, obligations for increases in taxes, utilities, high health care costs and loan payments make it even more difficult.

With this ever-increasing burden, it is no wonder that small businesses are not thriving. And despite the barriers that are placed in front of them, small business owners are using their creativity to survive. The Small Business Administration has entrepreneurial technical assistance programs that must be reassessed in order to ensure that they are providing the most effective assistance to small business.

When the men and women who have chosen to serve their country honorably in the armed services retire and return home, they are often faced with a daunting task of beginning new careers. Many times, they choose to serve their country in another way. These brave Americans frequently choose to open up a small business and contribute to the growth of America's economy. For these great Americans, we must provide them with the very best training to ensure the ease of transition to their new civilian lives.

This important legislation modernizes one of SBA's most critical programs, the Veterans Business Center program, so it can help them become entrepreneurs during these difficult economic times. It will show them how to use their skills and creativity to establish small businesses and survive until such time as the economic climate allows their businesses to thrive. Then it will provide them with the assistance they need to help grow their business.

Currently, the Office of Veterans Affairs at the SBA oversees five Veterans Business Centers that serve our veterans. Under this legislation, a Veterans Business Center program will be established to develop and run a larger network of Veterans Business Centers.

Special attention will be paid to the areas of the country with dense veteran populations, such as those surrounding military facilities. These centers will offer counseling to veterans through one-on-one instruction. It will also provide continuing education to those who may have run a small business before entering the armed services and have returned to their business after a tour of duty.

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Frequently overlooked and underappreciated are the spouses of Americans who have served in the Armed Forces. These individuals also face the challenges that a life in the armed services may present, including pro-

viding for a family in the absence of the servicemember. Under this legislation, spouses of deceased servicemembers will also benefit from the counseling and training of Veterans Business Centers if they are starting or running a small business.

Enlisted personnel are not the only ones serving our country. Members of the National Guard are frequently called upon at a moment's notice to provide assistance, whether in disaster relief efforts or in tours of duty overseas during wartime. Given the service they provide to the country, they should have the same resources as enlisted members of the armed services when their commitment to their fellow citizens is over. This bill would open Veterans Business Centers to members of the National Guard.

Everyone knows that a good business plan is the cornerstone of any successful small business. Creating and executing the business plan requires extensive business knowledge and ingenuity, including the ability to predict potential obstacles to the success that may unfold at any time.

This bill fortifies an already existing program that teaches America's veterans how to tackle their problems head on. In short, this bill sharpens an already existing tool employed by the SBA to cultivate one of our Nation's greatest natural resources, its veteran entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation makes crucial changes to an important program at a critical time. I commend Mr. NYE for his hard work on this bill. I also commend Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ for moving this bill so swiftly through committee.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the sponsor of the legislation, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. NYE).

Mr. NYE. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ for helping me bring my bill to the floor today. I can't thank my good friend enough for the hard work and the bipartisanship that she has shown in her leadership of the committee. I couldn't ask for a better chairwoman. I would also like to thank Ranking Member GRAVES and Mr. THOMPSON for their support.

Mr. Speaker, I have the honor to represent Virginia's Second Congressional District, home to the largest concentration of veterans, military personnel and military families anywhere in the country. We know firsthand that our community is stronger not only because of the service of our military personnel but also because of the contributions of our veterans.

The same drive and dedication that leads men and women from Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore to serve our country in uniform also leads many of our veterans to take on the challenge of entrepreneurship. Like small businesses all across the country, veteran-owned small businesses are a

crucial part of our economy, helping to create jobs and spur economic growth.

It's no secret why they are successful. The skills and training that our veterans learn in the military are incredibly valuable in the private sector. However, despite their experience, many veterans leave the military without the resources to translate their skills to the challenges of starting and running a business. This bill will make sure our veterans have the support they need by establishing a nationwide network of Veterans Business Centers.

These centers will provide counseling and business training. They will assist in accessing capital and securing loans and credit, and they will help veterans navigate the procurement process to compete more effectively in the Federal marketplace.

Earlier this year, I spoke with a veteran in my district who started his own small business just 3 years ago; and as of this year, he has already created hundreds of jobs. Despite years of experience in the military, he told me that the only way that he got started was because of the support from other veteran business owners who showed him the ropes.

While he was fortunate, not all of our veterans are in the same position. The Veterans Business Centers will ensure that all veterans have access to the same resources and information so that they too can launch and grow their own businesses. We know already from the existing outreach centers and Small Business Development Centers that the model can be very successful. My bill will build on what works and expand access to these critical services, especially in areas of the country with large numbers of veterans.

The Veterans Business Center Act of 2009 has the support of both the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars; and most importantly, it will help spur the growth of small businesses and create jobs because at a time when we are working to rebuild our economy, America must draw upon the ingenuity of our small businesses and the dedication of our veteran entrepreneurs. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlelady from Florida (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE).

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1803, the Veterans Business Center Act of 2009. By creating a Veterans Business Center program, this bill supplies veterans with the academic, instructional and economic support that they need to start their own businesses. In my home State of Florida, 99 percent of the State's employers are small businesses. At a time when Florida is facing unprecedented economic difficulties, this bill will provide veterans in my district with the entrepreneurial training and counseling that they need to enter this vital part of Florida's economy.

I especially like the part of the bill that targets areas with high veteran populations. Madam Chairman, do I have the area for you: certainly the Tampa Bay area is home to so many veterans. We have MacDill; we have two wonderful veterans hospitals right there; and the third one is about to be built in the Orlando area.

While serving in the Armed Forces, our men and women in uniform often need to put their own career goals and ambitions on hold while risking their lives to protect our freedom. One way that we can honor our troops for their sacrifices and bravery is to provide them with the opportunity to pursue their dreams once they return from the battlefield. This Veterans Business Center Act of 2009 is an important step in achieving this goal. I want to thank Mr. NYE for introducing this bill and certainly Ms. VELÁZQUEZ from New York for allowing the bill to come before her committee and eventually to the floor. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers. If the gentleman is ready to close or yield back, I am ready to close.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. I just want to thank the chairwoman for her leadership with this and Mr. NYE for this piece of legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Again, Mr. Speaker, let me just take the opportunity to thank Mr. NYE and all the members from the other side on the Small Business Committee who have worked on this legislation. I encourage all the Members to support this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1803, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EDUCATING ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY ACT

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1807) to provide distance learning to potential and existing entrepreneurs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1807

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 "Educating Entrepreneurs through Today's Technology Act".

SEC. 2. EDUCATING ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY.

The Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 631 et seq.) is amended by redesignating section 44

as section 45 and by inserting the following new section after section 43:

"SEC. 44. EDUCATING AND NETWORKING ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY.

"(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to provide distance learning and opportunities for the exchange of peer-to-peer technical assistance through online networking to potential and existing entrepreneurs through the use of technology.

"(b) DEFINITION.—As used in this section, the term 'qualified third-party vendor' means an entity with experience in distance learning content or communications technology, or both, with the ability to utilize on-line, satellite, video-on-demand, and connected community-based organizations to distribute and conduct distance learning and establish an online network for use by potential and existing entrepreneurs to facilitate the exchange of peer-to-peer technical assistance related to entrepreneurship, credit management, financial literacy, and Federal small business development programs.

"(c) AUTHORITY.—The Administrator shall contract with qualified third-party vendors for entrepreneurial training content, the development of communications technology that can distribute content under this section throughout the United States, and the establishment of a nationwide, online network for the exchange of peer-to-peer technical assistance. The Administrator shall contract with at least two qualified third-party vendors to develop content.

"(d) CONTENT.—The Administrator shall ensure that the content referred to in subsection (c) is timely and relevant to entrepreneurial development and can be successfully communicated remotely to an audience through the use of technology. The Administrator shall, to the maximum extent practicable, promote content that makes use of technologies that allow for remote interaction by the content provider with an audience. The Administrator shall ensure that the content is catalogued and accessible to small businesses on-line or through other remote technologies.

"(e) COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY.—The Administrator shall ensure that the communications technology referred to in subsection (c) is able to distribute content throughout all 50 States and the territories of the United States to small business concerns, home-based businesses, Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, Veterans Business Centers, SCORE chapters, and the Small Business Administration and network entrepreneurs throughout all 50 States and the territories of the United States to allow for peer-to-peer learning through the creation of a location online that allows entrepreneurs and small business owners the opportunity to exchange technical assistance through the sharing of information. To the extent possible, the qualified third-party vendor should deliver the content and facilitate the networking using broadband technology.

"(f) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—The Administrator shall submit a report to Congress 6 months after the date of the enactment of this section containing an analysis of the Small Business Administration's progress in implementing this section. The Administrator shall submit a report to Congress 1 year after the date of the enactment of this section and annually thereafter containing the number of presentations made under this section, the number of small businesses served under this section, the extent to which this section resulted in the establishment of new businesses, and feedback on the usefulness of this medium in presenting entrepreneurial education and facilitating the exchange of peer-to-peer technical assistance throughout the United States.