

quickly so that we can get back to our constituents and our families in a timely manner.

So I am proud to rise in support of this resolution, Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady from New York for offering it.

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

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BLUMENAUER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1401, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECOGNIZING THE FREIGHT RAILROAD INDUSTRY

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 1366) recognizing and honoring the freight rail industry, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 1366

Whereas the United States utilizes the most efficient and productive freight railroad system in the world;

Whereas freight rail has played a critical role in the economic development of the United States and has helped to build cities and strengthen infrastructure throughout this great Nation;

Whereas the first common carrier railroad in North America, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, was chartered by the State of Maryland in 1827;

Whereas freight rail has been instrumental in bringing American goods to market nationally and internationally since 1830;

Whereas the United States freight rail network has over 560 railroad companies, includes 140,000 miles of track and carries more than 2,200,000,000 tons of freight annually;

Whereas 43 percent of all intercity freight volume is moved by freight rail, including the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the coal we use for domestic energy, and the automobiles we drive;

Whereas freight railroads have nearly doubled the amount of cargo they have shipped over the past 3 decades with virtually no increase in fuel consumption;

Whereas freight rail is one of the most fuel-efficient modes of transportation, able to move one ton of freight 480 miles on 1 gallon of diesel fuel;

Whereas freight railroads have increased fuel economy by an average of 45 percent since 1990;

Whereas, from 1980 to 2009, United States freight railroads consumed 55,000,000,000 fewer gallons of fuel and emitted 617,000,000 fewer tons of carbon dioxide than they would have if their fuel efficiency had not improved;

Whereas the freight railroad sector complies with the Environmental Protection Agency's new locomotive emissions standards which will cut particulate emissions by up to 90 percent and nitrogen oxide emissions by up to 80 percent;

Whereas the freight rail industry has created good-paying jobs and provided its workers with

good benefits, and as of 2008, there were 183,743 employees working for the freight railroads;

Whereas freight rail continues to play a vital role in the United States growth, job creation, and economic recovery;

Whereas freight rail companies have reinvested \$460,000,000,000 in revenues toward equipment, maintenance, and rail expansion since 1980, which has supported employment and economic activity throughout the United States;

Whereas such investments have continued even during the economic downturn, with major railroads spending more than \$10,000,000,000 in 2008 on capital improvements and similar amounts in 2009;

Whereas for every \$1 invested in freight rail capacity, the national economy sees \$3 in economic output;

Whereas freight rail growth will continue to generate jobs and produce a reliable means of transporting goods;

Whereas the seven Class I freight railroads have joined the Environmental Protection Agency's "SmartWay Transport", which works to improve fuel efficiency and reduce harmful greenhouse gases;

Whereas both the public and private sector and organized labor have contributed significantly toward the creation of the freight rail infrastructure we use today;

Whereas the freight rail industry has built one of the world's most envied infrastructure networks; and

Whereas a strong freight rail system is critical to the economic and environmental well-being of the United States of America: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) recognizes the contributions the freight rail industry and its employees have made to the national transportation system; and

(2) supports the efforts of the freight rail industry and its employees to continue improving safety as our Nation moves forward with developing its infrastructure.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H. Res. 1366.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 1366, as amended, introduced by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE), which honors the freight railroad industry and its employees and the important contributions they have made to our Nation and the national transportation system.

Freight railroads have a long important history in the United States. Beginning in the early 1800s, during the Industrial Revolution, freight railroads played a critical role in the expansion and economic development of the Nation. Since May 24, 1830, when the Baltimore Ohio Railroad, now part of the CSX, the Nation's first common-carrier railroad, opened for business from Bal-

timore West to Ellicott City, freight rail has helped bring American goods to markets domestically and internationally. On May 10, 1869, the industry literally transformed America when the golden spike was driven into the final tie that joined 1,776 miles of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railways, creating the Nation's first transcontinental railroad.

Today the freight rail industry employs more than 183,000 hardworking, dedicated Americans who help keep our country and its trains moving 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our freight rail industry boasts a vast network across the country. There are more than 560 freight rail companies in the United States that operate 140,000 miles of track and carry more than 2.2 billion tons of freight annually.

Freight rail is also one of the most energy-efficient modes of transportation. It is able to move one ton of freight 480 miles on one gallon of diesel fuel, and helps reduce congestion. One train can take 280 trucks off the road, the equivalent of 1,100 automobiles.

Freight and intercity passenger rails are also important components of our Nation's economic strength and mobility. Freight railroads account for 43 percent of intercity freight volume, more than any other mode of transportation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Res. 1366.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of H. Res. 1366, recognizing and honoring the United States freight rail industry. Before I do, I must note, once again, as other of my colleagues have, that every single transportation bill on today's suspension calendar is a Democratic bill. The majority has not been living up to the common practice of a 70/30 split on those suspension calendars. Currently, it's running at about 95-5 percent, although I am pleased to say that they've added three Republican suspension bills to the calendar later this week. So I hope the majority will continue to try to honor that common practice we've had in the House for a number of years.

We are honoring the freight rails today because our freight rail network is the undisputed envy of the world. Every year freight trains move 40 tons of material for every man, woman and child in this country. Railroads provide a remarkable public benefit, reducing traffic on the highways, lowering pollution, and providing a less expensive mode of transit for freight. And this public benefit is provided at no expense to taxpayers.

Perhaps the greatest thing about the railroad industry is that it utilizes private money rather than public funds to build and maintain its infrastructure. Investors risk billions of capital annually to support the Nation's railroads because these private companies

produce a reliable, although modest return to investors. We must not jeopardize this critical industry by over-regulating or re-regulating and creating an environment where railroads cannot access the capital to maintain and expand their operations.

□ 1220

Without this access to investment capital, the industry will decline, as it has in the past. And we don't want to be here 10 or 15 years from now discussing taxpayer subsidies for the freight rail industry.

Over the course of the 20th century, Congress enacted policies that nearly ruined the railroads in the name of reducing shipping rates. These policies discouraged investors, and led to decay in the railroad industry. "Standing derailments" became common in this dark era, a term that was used for an idle freight car that simply collapses on its side because of rotten tracks. Over one-fifth of the Nation's railroads were owned by bankrupt firms by the end of the 1970s.

But the Staggers Reform Act in 1980 created an environment that has led to the revitalized freight network we all benefit from today. Railroads are prosperous again, productivity has soared, and rail continues to gain market share thanks to improvements in service and competitive pricing. This reconnaissance culminated earlier this year when Warren Buffett made his \$34 billion investment in the BNSF railroad.

Despite the fact that shipping rates are much lower today than they were in the 1980s, and freight rates in the U.S. are half of what they are in Europe and Japan, the same forces are at play that nearly destroyed the railroads in the 20th century. Already the urge to regulate has led to a policy that will force the railroads to spend more than \$12 billion on positive train control, a price tag that continues to grow at an alarming rate. Positive train control has a cost-benefit ratio of 20 to 1, and will prevent less than 3 percent of rail accidents. It is my belief that railroads themselves are the best judge of where to invest capital dollars for safety improvements, not Congress.

We should work together with the railroads to identify areas of safety improvement that can be accomplished at a reasonable cost. And I believe we should reexamine the scope of the positive train control mandate.

I note that this is the first time that Congress has considered a resolution recognizing and honoring the freight railroads alone. I think it's very appropriate, because the National Train Day resolution we passed earlier this year was changed from previous years' versions to focus solely on Amtrak and passenger rail. Amtrak operates primarily on private freight tracks. Without the continued economic vitality of the freight railroads and their constant investment in maintaining 140,000 miles of track in the U.S., Amtrak

would not have a national passenger rail system.

In closing, I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 1366, and believe that Congress should honor the freight rail industry by working to create an environment that will allow it to have continued success.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to respond to my friend, Mr. SHUSTER.

Mr. Speaker, let me say for the record Mr. SHUSTER made a point that we have Democratic bills from the committee before the House today and no Republican bills. The gentleman may or may not know that this Thursday Chairman OBERSTAR has agreed to markup five Republican bills in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

For the record, I would point out that in the 110th and 111th Congress both, the committee passed well over 40, in fact I think 42 bills out of the committee, and moved them through the House. So I would just for the record say that to my friend from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SHUSTER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. COSTELLO. I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SHUSTER. I would say thank you. I did make note we are getting three more bills, and we appreciate the effort.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE), my friend and the sponsor of this resolution.

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking Chairman OBERSTAR, Ranking Member MICA, my friend Chairman COSTELLO, and the staff of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for their strong support of this important resolution.

House Resolution 1366 formally recognizes the contributions and accomplishment of the freight rail industry and its employees throughout our great Nation. Like many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, freight rail is incredibly important to my district and my home State of Illinois.

I have had the opportunity to see firsthand the hard work freight rail employees put forth each and every day. In cities like Galesburg, Rock Island, and Decatur, I am constantly reminded of the positive impact that this industry has had on the economies of the localities and the improvements of our Nation's transportation infrastructure.

Throughout its rich American history, freight rail has proven time and again to be among the most efficient, environmentally friendly ways of transporting our Nation's goods. Freight rail generates hundreds of billions of dollars in annual economic activity, and supports over 1.2 million

jobs throughout the United States. As our economy continues to recover, the freight rail industry will be an essential component in fulfilling the great demand to move goods again and put more Americans back to work.

I am proud to say that I have received letters of support for this resolution from both the business and the labor sector, including the Association of American Railroads, Growth Options for the 21st Century, and the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO.

I have no doubt that the industry will continue to contribute in indispensable ways to the health and growth of the United States economy and our infrastructure, and will continue to reduce its impact on the environment.

Again, I thank the chairman and my colleagues on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for supporting this resolution. I believe that Congress is long overdue in formally recognizing the industry and the vital role it continues to play in our country's growth, job creation, and economic recovery. I urge my friends on both sides of the aisle to support this noncontroversial resolution.

ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN RAILROADS,
MAY 19, 2010.

Hon. PHIL HARE,
Cannon House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN HARE: I am writing in support of your resolution recognizing and honoring America's freight rail industry. H. Res. 1366 correctly notes that our nation's freight railroads operate the safest, cleanest, most efficient and most environmentally sound rail system in the world. We've worked hard to earn these credentials and look to set the standards even higher moving forward.

Freight rail is a highly efficient industry that is essential to the U.S. economy and economic recovery. Not only does our industry employ nearly 190,000 well-paid workers, the overwhelming majority which are union employees, but freight rail also supports millions of jobs for workers in American businesses that rely on our industry to ship their goods.

We are committed to continuing to provide the affordable, efficient transportation our customers depend on. And we will do so in the most environmentally sensitive and energy efficient manner possible. As you so eloquently stated, freight railroads meet our nation's transportation needs today and will have an even more positive impact in the future. We like to say that our nation's recovery is running on our steel spine.

Thank you again for taking the time to recognize our industry and the important benefits we deliver for America.

Sincerely,

EDWARD R. HAMBERGER,
President and
Chief Executive Officer.

GROWTH OPTIONS
FOR THE 21ST CENTURY,
Alexandria, VA, May 20, 2010.

Hon. PHIL HARE,
Member of Congress, Cannon House Office
Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN HARE: As President of Growth Options for the 21st Century (Go21), I would like to thank you for introducing H. Res. 1366 to help focus well deserved attention on the important contributions of

freight rail to improving quality of life in the United States. As a nonprofit grassroots organization devoted to advancing policies that maximize usage of our rail system, we fully support H. Res. 1366.

Since we founded Go21 in 2004, we have worked hard to spread the word about the public benefits of rail. I am pleased to say that to date, more than 3,500 community leaders from all across the nation and every part of the political spectrum have joined us in this effort. As your resolution notes, a strong freight rail system is a key component in rebuilding our nation's economy and creating jobs. Able to move a ton of freight 480 miles on a single gallon of fuel, rail is also helping to reduce our dependence on foreign oil while also decreasing emissions of pollutants.

In addition to the more than 190,000 Americans who make their livings working directly for the railroads, thousands more American jobs are dependent on the safe, efficient and cost effective transportation that rail provides. As many Go21 supporters can attest, rail is a vital link that is helping to drive the economic recovery and create new jobs in their own communities.

Go21 strongly supports your efforts and H. Res. 1366 and encourages Congress to pass this resolution with bi-partisan support.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM C. GIBB,
President.

TRANSPORTATION TRADES DEPARTMENT,
Washington, DC, July 20, 2010.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), including our affiliated rail unions, I would like to express support for H. Res. 1366, introduced by Representative Phil Hare, which recognizes and honors the freight rail industry and its employees. For decades, the rail industry and its dedicated workers have contributed to our national transportation system and played a significant role in the growth and development of America's economy and infrastructure.

Today freight rail generates nearly \$265 billion in annual economic activity, making it a critical component of our national economy. The industry employs nearly two hundred thousand rail workers; the vast majority of which earn good pay and benefits through collective bargaining agreements. These rail workers operate and oversee the system, working to deliver tons of goods annually to destinations across the country. In addition to the workers freight rail directly employs, it also supports more than one million jobs in other industries throughout our economy and is an important part of our national transportation system.

According to the Department of Transportation, by 2035 total freight transportation will rise 92 percent from 2002 levels; this includes an 88 percent increase for railroads. Expanding freight rail infrastructure and capacity to meet this demand is critical and will create thousands of additional jobs across the country. During a time of historic unemployment levels, the freight rail industry is well-positioned to put thousands of Americans back to work.

To recognize the achievements of freight rail workers and the entire industry, we ask that you support H. Res. 1366 and advance policies that promote a rail system that creates and sustains good jobs, protects workers, and continues to enhance the safety and efficiency of the system.

Sincerely,

EDWARD WYTKIND,
President.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 1366, as amended,

which honors the freight railroad industry and its employees and the important contributions they have made to our nation and the national transportation system.

Freight railroads have played an essential role in the growth of our country since 1825, when Colonel John Stevens, considered the father of railroads, demonstrated the feasibility of steam locomotion on a circular experimental track constructed on his estate in Hoboken, New Jersey. By 1830, railroads were still in their infancy and there was less than 40 miles of track in operation.

However, Peter Cooper's Tom Thumb locomotive would change the face of railroad locomotion forever on August 28, 1830, when his American-built locomotive was challenged by horse-drawn equipment in a head-to-head race. The Tom Thumb easily pulled away from the horse until a belt on the locomotive slipped and failed. Though Peter Cooper and his locomotive lost the race, it was apparent that the locomotive offered superior performance. Steam locomotives would reign over American railroads for the next 100 years.

From these very humble beginnings, railroads brought economic and social changes never dreamed of by early Americans. Just 10 years later, in 1840, railroad mileage increased to slightly over 2,800 miles, tripling to over 9,000 miles by 1850. In 1860, mileage tripled again to more than 30,000 miles and brought prosperity to all the communities that railroads touched. Railroads moved manufactured goods, farm implements, and building materials to the west, while bringing meat, produce and other crops to the east. Steam locomotives raced along averaging 25 miles per hour, reducing trips that used to take days to hours. For example, a trip from Cincinnati, Ohio, to St. Louis, Missouri, was reduced from three days to just 16 hours.

On July 1, 1862, the Pacific Railway Act of 1862, as enacted by Congress, was approved and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. This led to the creation of the first transcontinental railroad, when the Central Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad linked at Promontory Summit, Utah, on May 10, 1869, connecting over 1700 miles of western railroads to the eastern railroads at the Missouri River. This established the first mechanized transcontinental transportation network that revolutionized the population and economy of the American west.

While the railroads moved goods across the country and helped build cities and towns across the west, the railroad was also the hi-tech industry of its day, responsible for innovations such as "standard time" and pioneering the use of the telegraph as a nationwide dispatching communication system.

The railroad industry was also a leader in bringing about worker protections. The Railway Labor Act of 1926 established basic principles of fair bargaining and mediation. Our Nation's social security system, enacted in 1935, was based partly on provisions of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1934. Today, more than 183,000 hardworking, dedicated Americans help keep our country and its trains moving around the clock.

Our freight rail industry is composed of an efficient and well-maintained network, moving 2.2 billion tons of freight over 140,000 miles of railroad annually. Freight rail is also one of the most energy-efficient modes of transportation, moving one ton of freight 480 miles on one

gallon of diesel fuel. One train can take 280 trucks off the road—the equivalent of 1,100 automobiles.

Freight and intercity passenger rail are important components of our nation's economic strength and mobility. Freight railroads account for 43 percent of intercity freight volume—more than any other mode of transportation.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Res. 1366.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 1366 and to recognize the vital role that the freight rail industry plays in this country.

When a massive volcano recently erupted in Iceland, ash spewed into the atmosphere cancelling thousands of flights and grounding travelers and goods across Europe.

In the midst of this chaos and confusion, Europe's rail industry answered the call for everyone and everything that simply needed to get from point A to point B.

Here in the United States, we must remember this.

Our railroads are less susceptible to the unpredictable conditions caused by natural disasters, inclement weather, terrorist threats, and more.

Since the 19th Century, American citizens and industry have placed their trust in rail. Its dependability is proven and unparalleled.

I call on my colleagues to join me in recognizing the freight industry as one of our greatest assets and remember we must continue to advance, utilize, and invest in America's railways.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I am proud today to support House Resolution 1366, Recognizing and Honoring the Freight Rail Industry. Freight rail is an important part of our transportation system because of the unique role that it plays as both an economical and environmentally-friendly freight mode. Freight rail moves goods from place to place efficiently, reliably, and without increasing congestion on our highways. It is an efficient mode of transport, averaging 457 freight ton miles per gallon of gasoline. If 10 percent of goods currently shipped by truck were instead shipped by freight rail, we would decrease our annual greenhouse gas emissions by more than 12 million tons. Furthermore, freight rail creates local, green jobs. Estimates suggest that each \$1 billion invested in freight rail creates 20,000 jobs. Freight rail plays an important role in making our communities safer, healthier, and more economically secure.

I appreciate the opportunity today to honor the men and women who make up our freight industry. I encourage my colleagues to consider freight rail as we look for ways to make our transportation system more efficient, more environmentally-friendly, and more effective. Many of my colleagues have cosponsored H.R. 5478, the Green Railcar Enhancement Act, legislation I introduced offering a tax credit for replacing or rebuilding old, inefficient railcars. I appreciate their support and I look forward to continuing to promote freight rail as a critical part of a 21st century transportation system.

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

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to support the resolution. 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 Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1366, as amended.

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. COSTELLO. 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.

MULTI-STATE DISASTER RELIEF ACT

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5825) to review, update, and revise the factors to measure the severity, magnitude, and impact of a disaster and to evaluate the need for assistance to individuals and households.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5825

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 "Multi-State Disaster Relief Act".

SEC. 2. INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE FACTORS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In order to provide more objective criteria for evaluating the need for assistance to individuals and households and to speed a declaration of a major disaster or emergency under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.), not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (referred to in this Act as the "Administrator"), in cooperation with representatives of State and local emergency management agencies, shall review, update, and revise through rulemaking the factors considered under section 206.48(b) of title 44, Code of Federal Regulations, to measure the severity, magnitude, and impact of a disaster.

(b) CONSIDERATION OF A CONTIGUOUS COUNTY.—In reviewing, updating, and revising the factors referenced in subsection (a) the Administrator shall include as a factor whether a contiguous county in an adjacent state has been designated in a major disaster or emergency as a result of the same incident.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 3 months after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's current regulations, policies, procedures, and practices on—

(1) recommending major disaster or emergency declarations in order to provide assistance to individuals and households; and

(2) making post-declaration designations of the need for assistance to individuals and households in a county that is contiguous to

a State that has received a major disaster or emergency declaration for the same incident.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. COSTELLO) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 5825.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5825, a bill to require the Federal Emergency Management Agency to review, update, and revise the factors to measure the severity, magnitude, and impact of a disaster and to evaluate the need for assistance to individuals and households, sponsored by my friend and colleague from Indiana, Congressman BARON HILL.

Under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, the President has the sole discretion to determine when a disaster is beyond the capability of State and local governments, and therefore, when FEMA and Federal assistance is needed. In doing so, the President looks to the administrator of FEMA for a recommendation.

FEMA published regulations more than 10 years ago to explain the factors it looks to when making a recommendation to the President on whether to declare a major disaster or emergency to provide assistance to individuals and households. These regulations are important, as they provide guidance to the States on when and how to seek Federal assistance under the Stafford Act, including specific criteria FEMA considers. Knowing this helps States put together the best information they can as quickly as possible, and hopefully expedite the process to get assistance where it is needed.

FEMA has recognized that these regulations need to be improved, and have been working with the States to do so. However, the process has been occurring for some time. This legislation would merely put a reasonable deadline of 1 year on that process. This legislation also requires that FEMA add to the list of criteria it considers whether an adjacent community across a State line has received a major disaster or emergency declaration for the same incident.

□ 1230

This logical approach recognizes that the impact of disasters do not stop at the State line. This is something that FEMA should be doing and, if they are

not already doing so, will do so under this legislation.

I thank my friend, Mr. HILL, for bringing this issue to the attention of the House and for sponsoring this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5825.

I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) will control the time.

There was no objection.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Obviously, we've heard it before. I'm disappointed that, frankly, none of the bills that we are considering today are from any Republicans, and I know that's something we need to continue to work on, but I want to refer to this specific legislation.

It would direct the administrator of FEMA to review and revise the current the regulations, as we just heard, related to eligibility under its Individuals and Households Program. Again, specifically, it would require FEMA to consider whether a county in one State is adjacent to a State that has been designated in a major disaster or emergency. In other words, there may be a county in a different State that may be affected, and that's got to be considered as well because, again, the impact of disasters are obviously not contained or limited to just manmade geographic boundaries.

In many cases, the destruction is significant enough that all States involved are designated in a major disaster emergency, but in some cases that's not the case. So there could be a State right next door that has one county that's been significantly hit but the rest of the State has not, and this would hopefully remedy that, and this would allow FEMA to look at that and remedy that.

I think this is a commonsense bill. It's also taking place now while we're already in the hurricane season, so I think it's important that we're doing this now. For those of us who are living in States that are too often—more often than we would like, because obviously once is too often—affected by storms and the like, this could not come soon enough.

So I want to thank the chairman and thank all of you for bringing this forward. It's a commonsense piece of legislation.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. COSTELLO. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the sponsor of this legislation, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL).

Mr. HILL. First, let me thank Chairman OBERSTAR and Subcommittee Chairwoman NORTON for working with me on this particular piece of legislation and for the continuous work on bills aimed at improving our country's emergency response and preparedness.