

this case as an original cosponsor of H. Res. 1540. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the author of the bill, the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER).

Mr. HERGER. I thank my good friend from California for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 1540, which I introduced to expose a growing crisis on public lands in my northern California congressional district and across the Nation. Mexican drug cartels are operating large-scale marijuana plantations on these lands, and the problem is getting worse by the day.

I recently joined law enforcement in a marijuana eradication raid in the forests of Shasta County, California, and saw firsthand the flourishing productivity of these foreign drug traffickers. Unfortunately, the Federal Government has not taken sufficient action to dismantle them, and a comprehensive strategy is long overdue.

These foreign drug cartels pose a severe threat to public safety. They are heavily armed and have repeatedly fired at law enforcement officers to protect their illegal crops. They endanger the lives of outdoorsmen who too frequently have been confronted by violent criminals while simply trying to enjoy their public lands. They use the drug profits to fund a multitude of violent crimes and provoke the political unrest in Mexico that could threaten our national security. They cause grave and costly damage to our environment, leaving behind tons of trash and dangerous chemicals and costing taxpayers an estimated \$11,000 to restore each acre of forest damaged by marijuana cultivation.

Mr. Speaker, our national forests should be a safe haven for families and recreation enthusiasts, not Mexican drug cartels. The American people should not have to fear for their safety while on a family camping trip. Taxpayers in our Nation should not have to bear the financial burden of the damage caused by drug traffickers. And the United States should never allow foreign cartels to reign free on the sovereign territory of our Nation. Let me say emphatically that these drug trafficking organizations must be pursued relentlessly, shut down permanently, and brought to justice unconditionally.

House Resolution 1540 spells out the crisis occurring on our public lands and affirms that the Federal Government must do more to confront this threat. It calls upon the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy to work in conjunction with Federal and State agencies to develop a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to permanently dismantle the foreign drug trafficking organizations that have found a sanctuary on these lands. It is an important first step designed to both shine the light on this unacceptable menace and to demand that Fed-

eral law enforcement agencies take more aggressive, more persistent, and more effective action to shut them down for good.

I want to thank Chairman CONYERS and Ranking Member SMITH for their commitment to addressing this serious threat to public safety and to our national sovereignty. I urge my colleagues to vote for this resolution.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS).

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, this resolution is seemingly innocuous, for who in this body would be against illicit agriculture on our Federal lands, and yet it gives you reason to wonder why we're not facing a crisis of illicit corn production, illicit potato production, illicit tobacco production on our Federal lands of the magnitude of the crisis of marijuana production involved with criminal enterprises on our Federal lands. This resolution only serves to perpetuate this failed policy of prohibition, which has led to the rise of the criminal production of marijuana on Federal lands.

The gentleman from California said that the Federal Government must do more to confront this threat. I would submit that the Federal Government can do more by doing less. My home State of Colorado, the gentleman's home State of California, many other States have legalized and allowed for the medical use of marijuana, the production of marijuana, in a regulated capacity. The American public is split and a number of States continue to consider legalization for other uses as well. But as long as it remains illegal and as long as there is a market demand, the production will be driven underground. No matter how much we throw at enforcement, it will continue to be a threat not only to our Federal lands, but to our border security and to our safety within our country.

The resolution states that, Whereas, Mexican drug traffickers use the revenue generated from marijuana production on Federal lands to support criminal activities, including human trafficking and illicit weapons smuggling, and to foster political unrest in Mexico. It is estimated that about half of the money that the Mexico cartels obtain is through the marijuana trade. Yes, by eliminating the failed policy of prohibition with regard to marijuana and replacing it with regulation we can cut the money to the criminal gangs by half—half the human trafficking, half the illicit weapons trafficking, half the casualties of the drug war—by focusing on the hard narcotic substances that are addictive and have enslaved a generation of youth.

I have no doubt that marijuana plantations, as the resolution states, pose a threat to the environmental health of Federal lands, that drug traffickers spray unregulated chemicals, pesticides, and fertilizers, but I submit that the best way to address that is to incorporate this into a meaningful and

enforceable agricultural policy for the country with regard to the regulatory structure for the production of marijuana.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume just to say that I support this resolution.

The concern is a considerable one. These cartels are in fact violent and vicious, and their violence has gone up over the last number of years, and it is affecting our districts very directly.

I might say to the gentleman who just spoke that we happen to be one of the States that allows for medicinal marijuana, and it is not very difficult to get a medicinal purpose for marijuana. But we also had before the voters in the State of California an opportunity to decide whether or not they wanted to make it legal, and it was voted down by a substantial margin. That being the case, I think this resolution needs to go forward, and I would urge my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

□ 1650

I would like to thank my colleagues from California, Mr. HERGER and Mr. LUNGREN, for their advocacy on this issue. I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 1540, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. HERGER. 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.

CRIMINAL HISTORY BACKGROUND CHECKS PILOT EXTENSION ACT OF 2010

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 3998) to extend the Child Safety Pilot Program.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3998

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 "Criminal History Background Checks Pilot Extension Act of 2010".

SEC. 2. EXTENSION.

Section 108(a)(3)(A) of the PROTECT Act (42 U.S.C. 5119a note) is amended by striking "92-month" and inserting "104-month".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. 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 gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, S. 3998, the Criminal History Background Checks Pilot Extension Act of 2010, will extend the national child safety pilot program for an additional 12 months.

Many Americans across the country graciously give their time and energy to volunteer and mentor children. While most of these volunteers act with good intentions, it is important that we are able to identify those who may misuse these opportunities to harm children.

The national child safety pilot program was passed in 2003 as part of the PROTECT Act. This program assists organizations in checking the criminal records of volunteers before placing them as mentors with children.

Since 2003, the national child safety pilot project has enabled State governments to work with youth-serving organizations to access FBI's national fingerprint-based background checks system. The pilot program has helped prevent child predators and sex offenders from getting access to children through legitimate mentoring programs by providing access to the more comprehensive data in the FBI's database. We have authorized this non-controversial fee-based program on three other occasions in anticipation of creating a permanent program. This pilot program has provided extremely important information to mentoring organizations—at no cost to taxpayers. We hope that this 12-month extension will give us more time to work with the Senate and the Department of Justice to permanently authorize this program.

I would like to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) for his leadership in this legislation and his commitment to keeping children safe. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

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

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, the House considers S. 3998, the Criminal History Background Checks Pilot Extension Act of 2010. This bill was introduced by Senator SCHUMER of New York and recently

passed the Senate by unanimous consent. I might just say parenthetically it makes me feel good that I finally found a bill sponsored by the gentleman from New York that I could support.

This bill extends the child safety pilot program, which provides background checks for volunteer organizations that work with children, for an additional year. Originally created, as the gentleman from Virginia said, in 2003 under the PROTECT Act, the child safety pilot program has proven itself to be an effective resource for protecting our children. Through the pilot project, nonprofit organizations that provide youth-based care may request criminal history background checks from the FBI on applicants for volunteer or employee positions that involve working with children.

A study by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children provided data that underscores the importance of the pilot program. The National Center found that of almost 90,000 background checks performed through the pilot program, 6 percent of volunteer applicants were found to have a criminal history of concern. These included serious offenses such as sexual abuse of minors, assault, child cruelty, drug offenses and even murder. Further, over 42 percent of those with criminal histories had convictions in a State other than the State in which they then were applying to volunteer. If the volunteer group had performed a search only of the in-state records, many relevant criminal convictions would not have been identified. One youth-serving organization that received 1600 applications for volunteer positions found that over 50 percent of the applicants lied about having a criminal history, even though they knew it would be subjected to a background check. Of the applicants with criminal records, 23 percent had a different name reflected on their record than the one used to apply to volunteer. Without access to the national criminal database, many of these dangerous individuals may have slipped through the cracks.

Mr. Speaker, volunteer and other child-serving organizations across the country are working hard to provide safe learning and growing environments for our children. That means hiring professional and responsible employees. This bill will help and continues to help these groups to do just that, by extending the pilot program.

The child safety pilot program is supported by the Boys and Girls Clubs of America; the YMCA; the Salvation Army; Big Brothers, Big Sisters of America; and Volunteers of America as well as many other important organizations. Many Members of this body are parents first and Members of Congress second. This legislation is critical to keeping our children safe from criminals.

If just a single child does not become a victim of crime because of this pro-

gram, then obviously it will have been successful. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlelady from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the manager of this bill for his continuing leadership on issues of ensuring the safety of our children. To the manager for our friends on the other side of the aisle, I likewise thank him for his long record in law enforcement and for supporting this legislation, which I rise to support, S. 3998, the Criminal History Background Checks Pilot Extension Act.

Mr. Speaker, our children permeate our lives and our society. Not only are children engaged in what we call organized activities such as the Boys and Girls Clubs which permeate all of our communities and districts, or little league baseball, football, soccer and basketball, in schools and after-school clubs; but they also do ad hoc things such as doing their own volunteer work and working with organizations that ask for young people to volunteer. I rise enthusiastically to support the opportunity for nonprofits and others to be able to access these criminal background checks and applaud the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that I've worked with over the years.

We are always saddened when we hear of a missing child, an abused child, or a child that has been murdered. Over the last couple of months and in the last year, we have seen children that have been dismembered, we have seen children that have been lost, we have seen children that have been brutally abused; certainly some at the hands of their relatives or parents. But if we can protect these children when they leave our home to ensure that they do have the safety of the adult leadership that is working with them, we will have made a giant step forward. Our children are our most precious resource. If we look at the crime statistics, we will see that they represent a sizable proportion of those children that have either been sexually abused or in fact suffered a violent act. So I think that this expansion is extremely important.

I would also commend to my colleagues my interest in seeing my legislation on the DNA data bank on sexual predators to be accessible all over the country to law enforcement and particularly isolated to those who are sexual predators as relates to children. I have spoken to many law enforcement officers who believe that this would be another expedited source of assistance to them. Obviously this would be a grim set of circumstances because it means that they would have in their possession a case that either a child was sexually molested and lived or a child was sexually molested and did not live. But anything that we can do

to ensure that law enforcement within the guidelines of our own Constitution and beliefs have all the resources that they need to protect our children I believe is extremely important.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to move this legislation, to hold hearings on this legislation, and to ensure that we give every tool to law enforcement to protect our children.

□ 1700

But in the instance of this legislation, this is, in fact, a very important statement about our commitment to protecting our children.

I congratulate Senator SCHUMER. And to all of the organizations that every day encounter adults that work with children, this gives you an added extra tool that I know that you will use to be able to ensure that our children have a full and complete quality of life, enjoy the activities that you provide for them, and, yes, have the opportunity to volunteer themselves and work with adults who they know are concerned about their best interests and not those who may have a record that would undermine the purpose and goals of the organization in which they work.

So, in conclusion, let me thank those who have supported this legislation and ask my colleagues to enthusiastically support S. 3998, the Criminal History Background Checks Pilot Extension Act.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I reiterate my support for this piece of legislation and yield back the balance of my time.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 3998.

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. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

TREATING AMERICAN SAMOA AND NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS AS SEPARATE STATES FOR CERTAIN CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3353) to provide for American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas to be treated as States for certain criminal justice programs.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3353

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

SECTION 1. TREATMENT AS A STATE FOR AMERICAN SAMOA AND CNMI.

Section 901(a)(2) of Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3791(a)(2)) is amended by striking "Islands;" and all that follows through the period and inserting "Islands;".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. 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 gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3353 will allow the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa to be treated as two separate entities for the purposes of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. Currently, these two areas are treated as one State for the distribution of Federal Byrne grants.

The Byrne Justice Assistance grants are a leading source of Federal justice funding to State and local jurisdictions. The program provides States, tribes, and local governments with critical funding necessary to support a range of program areas, including law enforcement, prosecution, courts, prevention, education, corrections, and crime victim and witness initiatives.

Although this bill does not change the Byrne grant formula, particularly the statutory minimum amount of the 0.25 percent that each State or territory is entitled to, it does change how the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa will be given funding under the grant program. The statutory minimum is granted to a State regardless of its population or crime rates. However, the Byrne grant funding increases if States have larger populations and higher crime rates. The three other territories—Puerto Rico, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands—are presently entitled to the minimum funding, as are all 50 States. The objective of this legislation is to provide the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa with the same statutory minimum to which every other State and territory is entitled.

I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3353, which does provide for American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to be treated as States for certain criminal justice programs.

This is sponsored by Mr. SABLON from the Northern Mariana Islands. We thank him for bringing this forward to us. As the gentleman from Virginia said, this will allow these two territories to be treated individually for the Byrne Grant Program. This will assist both of them in dealing with some of the law enforcement challenges that they have.

This increase in formula grant funding will provide additional resources to territorial law enforcement officials to help them combat crime. For example, this additional funding will help officials cover the costs of purchasing and maintaining police vehicles and other equipment which have to be shipped to the island.

H.R. 3353 will also help the territorial governments to provide much-needed services to the victims of crime. Because of the remoteness of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa, these costs are quite high and services are very limited. For instance, there are three main inhabited islands in the Northern Mariana Islands but only one shelter that provides services for victims of domestic violence.

The increase in Byrne JAG grants will also help to build capacity and sustain programs to serve crime victims. As there are a limited number of crime victim specialists and advocates in the territories, these funds can be used to hire and relocate additional staff from the U.S. mainland.

This is important legislation that will help law enforcement officials in the Northern Marianas and American Samoa to accomplish their mission. So I support this bill, and I ask my colleagues to vote in favor of its adoption.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLON).

Mr. SABLON. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3353, the bill I introduced to improve the effectiveness of the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program in the Northern Mariana Islands and in American Samoa.

I want to thank Chairman JOHN CONYERS, Chairman BOBBY SCOTT, and their staff for their help in bringing this bill to the House floor. I also want to thank my colleagues on the other side of the aisle for their support for my bill under a suspension of the rules.

Approval of H.R. 3353 would further our national policy to support a broad range of activities carried out by State and territorial governments to prevent and control crime, as well as to improve their criminal justice systems. Program funds are allocated using a formula that provides a minimum amount for each jurisdiction to accomplish these goals. The sole exceptions