

CONDOLENCES TO THE REPUBLIC
OF TURKEY

HON. MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 23, 2014

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my condolences to the people of Turkey for the worst mining accident in that country's history. I recently returned from the region, where my colleagues and I met with Turkish leaders to discuss anti-terrorism cooperation and other issues of bilateral importance. We were received with a very warm welcome and appreciated the opportunity to meet with high level government officials.

The road ahead will not be an easy one. Yet the people of Turkey, one of our strongest allies, should know that they are not alone. The people of the United States will keep them in their thoughts and prayers as they seek to recover from an unbelievable tragedy.

IN HONOR OF OFFICER STEPHEN
ARKELL

HON. ANN M. KUSTER

OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 23, 2014

Ms. KUSTER. Mr. Speaker, today we honor Officer Stephen Arkell of the Brentwood Police Department for his heroism and dedication to the people of New Hampshire. I was deeply saddened to hear the tragic news of Officer Arkell losing his life in the line of duty. Arkell's brave and selfless actions deserve our greatest honor and respect. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and community during this difficult time. In responding to such tragedies, our society shows its capacity for resilience and strength.

Our law enforcement officials and first responders confront danger on a daily basis in order to keep our communities safe from harm, and I am committed to advocating for these dedicated men and women who preserve our safety and protect our families. These courageous men and women devote their lives to protecting our way of life, and earn our utmost gratitude and support on a daily basis.

As a state and a nation, we must work together to stamp out violent crime and protect the men and women like Officer Stephen Arkell who devote themselves to protecting us. We owe our deepest gratitude to Officer Arkell, and to all law enforcement officials for all that they do to make New Hampshire and our nation a safer place to live and work.

H.R. 4435, THE NATIONAL DEFENSE
AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FIS-
CAL YEAR 2015

SPEECH OF

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 2014

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under

consideration the bill (H.R. 4435) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2015 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member of the Armed Services Committee and their staffs for working with me on several amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015, H.R. 4435.

This legislation reaffirms our commitment to our men and women in uniform, ensuring they have the necessary tools to support our national defense. In addition to my amendments, which will help create savings and improve department management, the bill before the House preserves essential benefits that are important to the thousands of active and retired military personnel and their families living in my Northern Virginia district. It also sustains the critical collaboration with the private sector in my district which partners with the Department on a wide variety of defense priorities, including cybersecurity, logistics, and information technology services.

With respect to federal investments in IT, I was pleased to co-author a comprehensive reform proposal with Chairman ISSA of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. It is based on our bipartisan bill, known as the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act, or FITARA, which passed the House with unanimous support earlier this year. I also want to thank our Committee's Ranking Member, Mr. CUMMINGS, for his generosity and leadership on these issues.

In the 21st century, effective governance is inextricably linked with how well government leverages technology to serve its citizens. Yet our current laws governing Federal IT procurement are antiquated, cumbersome, and out of step with technological change.

Our bipartisan FITARA amendment addresses this by comprehensively streamlining and strengthening the Federal IT acquisition process. FITARA recognizes that effective Federal IT procurement reform must begin with leadership and accountability. It enhances CIO authorities to ensure agency heads have talented leaders to serve as their primary advisers on IT management; to recruit and retain talented IT staff; and to oversee critical IT investments across the organization.

FITARA also accelerates data center optimization and strengthens the accountability and transparency of Federal IT programs. If enacted, 80 percent of the approximately \$80 billion spent annually on Federal IT investment would be required to be posted on the online IT Dashboard for the public to review, compared to the 50 percent or less that is available today. Fortunately, a bipartisan consensus is forming around the urgent need to streamline and strengthen how the Federal Government acquires and deploys information technology. Now is the time to ensure IT reforms are adopted government-wide and given the force of law.

I also was pleased to offer an amendment that will permanently authorize the use of simplified acquisition procedures for certain commercial items, which has the support of Department of Defense and other agencies, as well as industry partners, such as the Professional Services Council. This activity was originally authorized as a 3-year test program

under the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996. The program aimed to simplify the contracting process by providing contracting officers with additional discretion and flexibility for the acquisition of commercial items not exceeding \$5 million. Since being enacted, Congress has extended this authority eight separate times, and it is now set to expire on January 1, 2015.

Earlier this year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) submitted a report to Congress, discussing the use of the test authority by the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, and Interior. GAO found that the test program reduced contracting lead time and administrative burdens with manageable risks. In responding to the GAO report, DHS and DOI both stated that the temporary nature of the test program hindered its use and recommended the authority be made permanent.

The Department of Defense offered the following comments in support of preserving this authority: "The test program provides benefits in terms of reducing lead time and administrative workload and enables faster delivery of much needed supplies and equipment to the Warfighter. For example, the U.S. Army Contracting Command Rock Island Contracting Center, which provides reach-back support to the theater, used this authority to execute several contract requirements in direct support of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) theater of operations in FY 2011. Without this authority, the procurement lead time would have doubled. This could have led to mission failure in contingency operations, particularly those in the CENTCOM theater of operations. In addition, this authority is extremely beneficial in responding to domestic crises such as Hurricane Katrina, Midwest flooding, and recent tornados."

In addition, I offered an amendment to extend for five years a successful hiring authority to allow Federal retirees to be temporarily rehired on a part-time basis to fill critical skills gaps, mentor and train younger workers, and stave off a "brain drain" as more and more Federal employees become eligible to retire. First adopted as part of the NDAA for FY2010, this authority allows the heads of federal agencies to bring back a limited number of Federal retirees for a limited time without them incurring a penalty on the annuity.

Over the past five years, agency leaders report this has been a valuable tool in providing them with flexibility to address staffing needs as retirements have begun to increase. Nearly half of the management staff within some agencies is eligible to retire today, and agencies face further challenges as positions are being left vacant due to budget shortfalls and hiring freezes. Thanks to this re-hiring authority, agencies are able to bring back experienced staff to bridge knowledge gaps and help prepare future leaders. This program is limited in scope so as not to supplant the urgent need to hire and train new federal workers. I was pleased to have the support of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association and the Government Management Coalition, which called this a "good-government initiative."

I also worked with the Armed Services Committee on two foreign affairs-related amendments. The first is a bipartisan amendment that I was pleased to introduce with my fellow co-chairs of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus Reps. DIAZ-BALART (FL), SIREN (NJ), and CARTER (TX). Our amendment directs the