ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

PEST MANAGEMENT RECORDS MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5714) to permit commercial applicators of pesticides to create, retain, submit, and convey pesticide application-related records, reports, data, and other information in electronic form.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5714

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 ''Pest Management Records Modernization Act''.

SEC. 2. USE OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS BY COMMERCIAL APPLICATORS OF PESTICIDES TO COMPLY WITH RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

Section 1491 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 136i–1) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(h) ELECTRONIC RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING.—Notwithstanding any contrary provision of Federal, State, or local law, commercial applicators of pesticides, including commercial applicators of restricted use pesticides, may create, retain, submit, and convey a pesticide application-related record, report, data, or other information in electronic form in order to satisfy any requirement for such creation, retention, submission, or conveyance, respectively, under any Federal, State, or local law.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 5714.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ) for being here to help with this bill today. I also want to thank my good friend and colleague from Oregon, Representative KURT SCHRADER, for his leadership on this important piece of legislation.

I rise today in support of H.R. 5714, the Pest Management Records Modernization Act.

Under the current law, the United States Department of Agriculture requires businesses that apply pesticides to maintain and provide access to records on their use, including the product name, amount, approximate date of application, and the location of application of each pesticide used.

While most States allow pesticide applicator businesses to convey information electronically to customers as a way to comply with consumer information requirements, a few States still require that the information be provided in paper or hard copy format. The challenge posed to the industry is not the longstanding consumer information requirements themselves but, rather, the very limited transmission options in certain States.

Today, businesses in virtually all sectors of the economy are going paperless as a way to save costs, increase efficiencies, and, yes, fulfill the range of local, State, and Federal regulatory requirements in a timely and proficient manner. Unfortunately, the transition to a paperless office for many pest management and other pesticide applicator businesses is more difficult than anticipated because of the decades-old State consumer information requirements that mandate transmission of such documents be via paper or hard copy. These requirements are especially disruptive for paperless companies that operate in multiple States, some of which permit electronic conveyance of the required information and others that don't.

The USDA permits records to be retained and conveyed electronically for restricted use pesticide applications. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of treatments performed by pest management professionals are general use pesticides.

The Pest Management Records Modernization Act is a commonsense change to existing law that will allow commercial applicators of pesticides to create, retain, and submit pesticide application-related records, reports, and other information in electronic form.

As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 5714, the Pest Management Records Modernization Act.

I urge my colleagues to support passage of this bipartisan legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

I want to thank my friend from Pennsylvania for his remarks and for clearly stating this commonsense piece of legislation and for his support of it.

I, too, would like to thank the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SCHRADER). He is the author of this piece of legislation. Something we have come to expect from Mr. SCHRADER is a commonsense, bipartisan piece of legislation.

□ 1230

H.R. 5714, the Pest Management Records Modernization Act, is pro-small business and pro-consumer. It improves the ability of pest management companies to communicate important information with their customers related to the products they use.

As you heard from the gentleman from Pennsylvania, most States require pest management and other applicator companies to provide customers with information related to pest treatments, either automatically or upon request. Most of the requirements are implemented and enforced by State departments of agriculture, which are the State pesticide regulatory agency in 40 States. The required information is typically information directly from the pesticide label. The overwhelming majority of treatments performed by pest management professionals involve general use pesticides.

Right now about 45 States permit electronic conveyance of this information directly to consumers. In fact, in the last 2 years, the States of California, Georgia, Wisconsin, Kansas, and Arizona have recognized the need to update their respective laws related to disclosure and passed legislation or taken administrative actions permitting electronic conveyance of pesticide application information.

Like businesses in countless sectors of the economy, professional pest management and other pest applicator businesses are going paperless as a way to save costs and increase efficiencies. Going paperless allows businesses to back up and better safeguard data and records in case of a fire, flood, or other disasters. It also makes it easier to prove compliance with various recordkeeping, reporting, and related requirements, plus it has the added advantage of being greener and more environmentally sound.

Unfortunately, the transition to a paperless office for many pest management and other pesticide applicator businesses is more difficult than anticipated because of antiquated State consumer information requirements from the 1970s and '80s that mandated transmission of such documents be via hard copies or paper and do not permit electronic conveyance. These requirements are especially disruptive for companies that have made the transition to paperless that operate in multiple States, some of which permit electronic conveyance and others that don't.

It is important to note H.R. 5714 does not put any new mandates on small businesses but, rather, provides them the ability to electronically convey information in the handful of States that have not yet addressed this in a changing e-commerce environment.

As I have said previously, and as my friend from Pennsylvania stated, H.R. 5714 is commonsense, it is bipartisan, it is pro-consumer, and it is pro-small