

new disaster relief fund, similar to the process for funding recovery from Superstorm Sandy, which did not go smoothly, to say the least. While this might be a positive step, it does not make H.R. 2647 a good bill.

With regard to title IX, the additional disaster relief fund, hopefully the majority will not rob Peter to pay Paul within the Forest budget in order to fund this disaster relief fund or leave title IX just as an empty hollow and useless gesture that never gets funded.

In the name of forest resiliency and health, H.R. 2647 undermines the NEPA process, discourages collaboration, distorts the intent of the Secure Rural Schools program, creates an extraordinary burden on citizens' access to the courts, and transforms the judicial review process.

This bill, quite frankly, is not about forest health. It is about increasing the numbers of trees removed from the forest.

The White House just communicated its strenuous opposition to H.R. 2647, and let me quote from that communication:

The administration strongly opposes H.R. 2647. The most important step Congress can take to increase the pace and scale of forest restoration and management of our national forests and the Department of the Interior lands is to fix the fire suppression funding and provide additional capacity for the Forest Service and Department of the Interior to manage the Nation's forests and other public lands. H.R. 2647 falls short of fixing the fire budget problem and contains other provisions that will undermine collaborative forest restoration, environmental safeguards, and public participation across the National Forest System and public lands.

Categorical inclusions that are part of title I are not the product of thoughtful consideration of the legislation. Instead, they pave the way for up to 8 square miles of clear cuts of old-growth trees with little or no environmental review.

Title II reduces to 3 months the time for environmental assessments and environmental impact statements for reforestation or salvage operations following a large-scale fire. The Forest Service testified that this time limit is unrealistic, encouraging snap judgments that can have horrible long-term consequences.

Title III strips away access to the courts that other speakers will speak to as well. You know, think about the group that would dominate the collaborative decisionmaking without any judicial review.

The bill also eliminates the Equal Access to Justice Act for successful litigants and forces them to do a prebond, a one-sided bond requirement to limit, if not eliminate, citizen activism and public participation in a problem that they can help solve rather looking at this as a threat.

I urge a "no" vote on the legislation.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania) having assumed the chair, Mr. HULTGREN, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2647) to expedite under the National Environmental Policy Act and improve forest management activities in units of the National Forest System derived from the public domain, on public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, and on tribal lands to return resilience to overgrown, fire-prone forested lands, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

REPORT ON H.R. 2995, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

Mr. CRENSHAW, from the Committee on Appropriations, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114-194) on the bill making appropriations for financial services and general government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2016, and for other purposes, which was referred to the Union Calendar and ordered to be printed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 1, rule XXI, all points of order are reserved on the bill.

RESILIENT FEDERAL FORESTS ACT OF 2015

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 347 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2647.

Will the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HULTGREN) kindly resume the chair.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2647) to expedite under the National Environmental Policy Act and improve forest management activities in units of the National Forest System derived from the public domain, on public lands under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management, and on tribal lands to return resilience to overgrown, fire-prone forested lands, and for other purposes, with Mr. HULTGREN (Acting Chair) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIR. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, 12½ minutes remained in general debate.

The gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) has 9 minutes remaining, and the gentlewoman from Massachusetts (Ms. TSONGAS) has 3½ minutes remain-

ing. Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON), a former member of our committee, but someone whose district clearly knows the significance and impact of forestlands and how they should be maintained.

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Chairman, the challenge that we face in the West is very obvious. Overgrown forests, bark beetle devastation, threat to our watersheds, threat to habitat, threat to public property that sensible people have long called for a solution to be able to have rendered.

I would like to be able to applaud the hard work of Chairman BISHOP, the committee, and particularly the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WESTERMAN) in putting commonsense pieces of legislation forward in H.R. 2647, the Resilient Federal Forests Act.

The concept of being proactive rather than being reactive, putting the health of our forests, protection of our watersheds, habitat for wildlife, and saving private property while bringing some control back to our States and our communities is long overdue.

Forward-looking and innovative legislation like the Resilient Federal Forests Act speaks to the very heart of responsible forest management. This is a piece of legislation, which is long overdue. We have seen the impact in pilot projects of healthy forests, the opportunity to be able to get the forests again in a healthy state, creating abundant ground cover and forage for our animals and protecting those watersheds.

This is a commonsense piece of legislation that I would like to encourage my colleagues to be able to support.

Ms. TSONGAS. I yield 2½ minutes to my colleague from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, impartial justice and access to the courts is a right guaranteed to every citizen in this country.

Across the street from this Chamber, Lady Justice sits blindfolded on the steps of the Supreme Court so we can all be reminded that justice should be blind. Today, we are debating yet another Republican bill restricting access to the courts to only those with deep pockets.

H.R. 2647 continues the alarming trend of Republican-sponsored legislation that proposes to limit the average American's access to the courts so politicans that line the pockets of politicians with campaign contributions can continue to profit.

H.R. 2647 requires that a citizen post a bond prior to challenging the United States Government's forest management activities. This bond must cover all the defendant's anticipated cost, expenses, and attorney's fees to be paid if the defendant prevails. In the rare occasion plaintiffs are successful, they will only be able to recover the amount posted in the bond and only if they win exactly on all counts. The government, however, does not have to cover any of the plaintiff's costs.