

the approval process through arbitrary deadlines.

Through an open, flexible, and timely process, NEPA empowers the public to weigh in on decisions. That means that the local farmer who owns land that would be affected by a Federal construction project—let's say a nasty pipeline like Keystone—it ensures that that local farmer would have the ability and would stand on local footing with the construction industry and with the Federal Government.

My amendment is vital to ensuring that the RAPID Act does not shut the public out of the process. I am sure that all minds agree that that is reasonable. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

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

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I do rise in opposition to this amendment.

I do share, however, the interest of the gentleman from Georgia in promoting the common good, as mentioned by Pope Francis when he spoke in this Chamber yesterday. But the common good is people coming together to improve their lives by creating improved infrastructure for transportation, whether that is highways or mass transit, for delivering energy resources to places where that energy needs to be delivered, to improving the shipping lanes so that goods can be shipped to and from this country and within this country in ways that make it easier for consumers to receive the energy, the products, the transportation that they need and deserve.

The RAPID Act will create jobs by ensuring that the Federal environmental review and permitting process works like it should. It will also make sure that these infrastructure projects that deliver the common good will do so in a reasonable period of time, so people won't have to wait 20 years, like we heard yesterday from the gentleman from Texas, about simply lowering the draft, the 8 feet lower, for ships to get up the waterway in east Texas to deliver goods and pick up goods from ports in that part of the country. Why 20 years to make a decision about dredging 8 feet from a waterway?

The RAPID Act is drafted to make agencies operate efficiently and transparently. That is not happening in so many, many instances. But, it does not prevent citizens from participating in that process. In fact, the bill makes sure that agencies provide the public with reasonable public comment periods. It authorizes up to 60 days of public comment on Environmental Impact Statements, up to 30 days of comments on environmental assessments and other documents, and grants the lead

agency authority to negotiate extensions or provide them on its own "for good cause."

□ 1030

This is more than fair. By comparison, the National Environmental Policy Act, which has been cited many times on the other side of the aisle, only requires agencies to allow 45 days for public comment—not the 60 days provided in the RAPID Act—on draft environmental impact statements and 30 days for public comments on final environmental impact statements.

The RAPID Act also reasonably requires that a person comment on an environmental document before challenging it in court and bring any suit within 6 months as opposed to 6 years. Opponents should not be able to delay a project indefinitely by playing "hide the ball" with agencies or by resting on their rights.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the amendment.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to respond. First, in the narrowed circumstances in which an agency may supplement an environmental impact statement under the bill, the lead agency "may" solicit comments from agencies and the public for not more than 30 days beginning on the date of the publication of the supplement.

CEQ regulations require an agency to provide for a 45-day public review and comment period, although there is also a provision in the CEQ regulations that allows CEQ to approve alternative procedures for supplemental EISs if circumstances warrant a deviation from the normal process.

Secondly, under the bill, each participating agency is to limit its comments on a project to areas within the authority and expertise of the agency and identify statutory authority for their comments.

It specifically prohibits the lead agency from acting upon, responding to or including any document that is "outside of the authority and expertise of the commenting participating agency."

This is inconsistent with the CEQ regulations, which allow all agencies—whether local, tribal, State, or Federal—to comment on any substantive issue relative to the NEPA analysis, just as all members of the public should be able to do.

So, finally, I would just point out that, if we are talking about efficiency and if we are talking about the common good, it does the public no good to cut out public comment from this process. If we can agree on that, then we can agree that this amendment is a good one. With that, I ask for its approval.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

The question was taken; and the Chair announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia will be postponed.

The Committee will rise informally.

The Speaker pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas) assumed the chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with an amendment in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1020. An act to define STEM education to include computer science, and to support existing STEM education programs at the National Science Foundation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

RESPONSIBLY AND PROFESSIONALLY INVIGORATING DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2015

The Committee resumed its sitting.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIR

The CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments printed in House Report 114-261 on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order:

Amendment No. 2 by Mr. LOWENTHAL of California.

Amendment No. 3 by Mr. GRIJALVA of Arizona.

Amendment No. 4 by Mr. GALLEGRO of Arizona.

Amendment No. 5 by Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas.

Amendment No. 6 by Mrs. DINGELL of Michigan.

Amendment No. 7 by Mr. PETERS of California.

Amendment No. 8 by Mr. GOSAR of Arizona.

Amendment No. 9 by Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas.

Amendment No. 10 by Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.

The Chair will reduce to 2 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote after the first vote in this series.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. LOWENTHAL

The CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. LOWENTHAL) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.