

the heads of the American Medical Association, the American Nursing Association, and the American Hospital Association. Doctors, hospital administrators, nurses—not politicians. The clear consensus is that the health care legislation, as it is taking shape here in Congress, can be expected to result in better patient care while holding costs in check. Let me repeat, the legislation, as it is taking shape in Congress, can result in better care at no more cost for all Americans.

**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.

**UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
FINANCIAL RELIEF ACT OF 2009**

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 22) to amend chapter 89 of title 5, United States Code, to allow the United States Postal Service to pay its share of contributions for annuitants' health benefits out of the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 22

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 "United States Postal Service Financial Relief Act of 2009".

**SEC. 2. GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTIONS FOR
POSTAL ANNUITANTS' HEALTH BENEFITS.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Clause (iii) of section 8909a(d)(3)(A) of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(iii) \$1,400,000,000, not later than September 30, 2009;"

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect as if included in the enactment of section 803(a)(1)(B) of the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act (Public Law 109-435; 120 Stat. 3251).

SEC. 3. TECHNICAL CORRECTION.

The heading for section 8909a of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "BENEFIT" and inserting "BENEFITS".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 22, the United States Postal Service Financial Relief Act of 2009, as amended, would permit the United States Postal Service to lower its 2009 payment into the retirement health benefit fund, \$5.4 billion, reduce it to \$1.4 billion. This bill does not provide any taxpayer funds to the Postal Service. In essence, H.R. 22 is intended to provide the Postal Service with some relief from its current financial crisis by lowering the amount of its 2009 payment due. The measure has been properly vetted and amended by the House Oversight Committee, in line with calls for a more fiscally responsible government. The bill, as amended, does not score.

The bill enjoys the support of 339 Members of the House from both parties. I would like to thank Representatives McHUGH of New York and DAVIS of Illinois for introducing this bill and for their hard work and patience in navigating the bill through the House. Further, I would like to thank the House Democratic leadership and the Budget Committee for working with us to help advance the bill to the floor.

□ 1245

Also I would like to thank and recognize Chairman LYNCH of Massachusetts for his leadership on the subcommittee and being a tireless advocate for the postal service and all of its employees. Unfortunately, Chairman LYNCH could not be with us today, but his statement will be in the RECORD.

Additionally, I would like to thank the gentleman from California, Congressman ISSA, for his support and strong work on this bill. Also Congressman CHAFFETZ for his work as well. I would like to recognize them because this is truly bipartisan support for this important legislation, which I think is so important.

The United States Postal Service is regularly acknowledged to be among the most trusted of the Federal agencies in part due to the positive relationship that its approximately 625,000 employees develop with local communities. The postal service is often the only Federal presence in many of the urban and rural areas throughout the United States, and it is often the face of the Federal Government.

Yet despite the best efforts of its employees, the postal service faces financial challenges unlike at any other time. Mail volumes have declined at a record pace, falling by 7 million pieces during the third quarter of fiscal year 2009, 14.3, compared to the same period last year. In fact, volume continued to fall for all types of mail: first class, standard, periodical, and also package services. The postal service ended the third quarter ending in 2009 with a loss of \$2.4 billion, its year-to-date net loss through the third quarter at \$4.7 billion.

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

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of this bill on January 6, the first legislative day, was appropriate. This is a problem for an organization, the United States Post Office, which is, in fact, 15 times larger than General Motors. The United States Post Office is not only a constitutional obligation but, in fact, an organization which has existed for the service of the United States of America since our founding.

But since the 1970s, the United States Post Office has had a problem. The problem is our own success. Alternate efficiencies have reduced the need for the United States Post Office to deliver mail. Invoices, payments, and certainly many other emails instead of paper mails are being delivered electronically today. The United States Post Office is also suffering from a recession that we all are suffering under.

Therefore, the committee has worked on a bipartisan basis to recognize that we must reform the post office again. Having just passed the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act in 2006, we are faced with another crisis; but rather than having that crisis lead to haphazard reductions, the chairman and I have worked together with Members on both sides of the aisle, as the chairman said, 339 cosponsors, to create a soft landing for the post office.

It will not be that soft, Mr. Speaker. It will, in fact, require that they accelerate the reduction in their force. It will require that they look at all costs and services. It will require without a doubt the closing of post offices around our Nation.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, these are difficult decisions. They are both financial and they're political. They impact the communities who have for so long allowed people to go to their corner post office to maintain a postal mailbox, to do other services. These services will be further away in the future.

So for that reason, although I would have preferred a major reform, I would have preferred that we were able to do some of these hard steps, I'm supporting an alternate course, one in which we use these last 2 weeks and only these last 2 weeks of the fiscal year to move this bill with a cost, as the chairman said, of zero because there is so little time left in the year. However, we are committed on this side of the aisle and I know the chairman shares this, to work with the postal service to find ways to reduce their costs, their overhead, and many of the legacy items that today make it difficult.

Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat something the chairman said because it's noteworthy for my conservative friends. The post office's money that we are talking about today is the money they have put aside. This is the only agency that works in this way. So