

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman misunderstands. The Federal employee doesn't know what is going to come out of the caller's mouth next, so classified information can come without notice.

Mr. ISSA. Reclaiming my time, classified information said by a Federal employee has an obligation to be said in a secure location. Of course, under the law, they can say no recording devices can be here in this secure location. But of course you go into a classified briefing, one, because you're cleared, and two, you go there knowingly. So let's not accept these kinds of things.

And let's understand, in 39 States, law enforcement is recording without the permission of the public—and more importantly, so is the IRS, the EPA, OSHA, Fish and Wildlife in many cases, or they're simply taking notes and holding you accountable. Remember, in America, if you answer the IRS wrong over the phone, you might very well get a bill; and your only ability to appeal that bill is to the IRS, and you must pay that bill before you can then go to the courts.

Let's understand, we're dealing in all kinds of agencies, and there are good people, lots of good people there. But on behalf of the 2 million Americans who work for the Federal Government, I want them to have the right to protect themselves by being able to have a right to record in all 50 States.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, as I close, let me say this. The chairman has made some allegations that things were not true—and I guess he's not talking about us, but I guess he's talking about the Federal Bureau of Investigation Agents Association in a letter that, just today, referring to what he just talked about, says—and I further quote from this letter of July 31, 2013:

Also, by requiring written notices under the threat of disciplinary action, H.R. 2711 would create new administrative and bureaucratic requirements for agents conducting investigations. The time and the resources available to agents are already stretched too thin, and new administrative burdens make it more difficult for agents to protect the public.

That's from them.

By the way, the letters from the Association of Assistant U.S. Attorneys and the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, their opposition to this bill goes to the bill that is on the floor right now, so they have their concerns.

Again, I wish that this was something that we could have had testimony so that we could hear from those law enforcement agencies so that we could come to some type of agreement with regard to their concerns, but we did not have that opportunity.

□ 1330

Mr. Speaker, based upon the arguments that we've already made, I would urge Members to vote against this legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ISSA. In closing, Mr. Speaker, we hold these truths to be self-evident: one of them clearly is our right of free speech; another, free association. But protecting from our government is what our Constitution is all about.

My Democratic friends want to talk about the good workers; but the ranking member knows well there are good workers, and there are some that aren't good. There are workers who would never call and harass somebody, and there are people who have threatened Americans repeatedly. We have whistleblowers, and we have proof of that. We have wrongdoing.

When you get harassed by the government or you simply want to make sure that you know what you said, you have the right to do it in 39 States. You have the right to do it in your State, but you may or may not have the right to do it in the other State which the Federal agency is calling you from. If you are a rancher—Fish and Wildlife, EPA, OSHA—these are not just names on a board; these are people who really affect your life and your liberty and your very commerce, your very ability to feed your family.

The minority whip talked about the Federal workforce not having a choice except to keep working because they need the money and they can't strike. We are not going to that issue. In the vast majority of States, this is already the law. They don't need the Federal Government's approval to record.

When we look at harmonizing how people in every State in the Union look to their government and expect their government to look to them, that is a solemn responsibility. We don't preempt States in any way, shape, or form. We simply make it clear that Americans have a relationship with their government that they can count on. One of them is if they get a harassing call from somebody, somebody who is out of line, or they're asked inappropriate questions, it won't be a "he said, he said, she said, he said." They'll have the ability to record it if they choose.

Around here, we know that fact-based documentation and recordings have made a huge difference in finding out the truth about things that have happened. We also know that what people say is often discounted here, even when they're talking about horrific things that happened to them.

If we didn't have documents, not coming very quickly and usually blacked out, about the IRS's abuse of Americans simply trying to teach the Constitution or in some other way assert their rights of free speech, if we didn't have any documentation, it would just be a "he said, she said." It shouldn't be a "he said, he said." It should be absolutely something where you have that right.

I want all 2 million American Federal workers, I want State workers, I want everyone to know that they have this ability. And, yes, I want Federal work-

ers to have an understanding that when they send an email out on the government email system, they, in fact, are sending out a public document, and it is going to be discovered potentially and used and they should be careful what they say or do, because they represent us, they represent the American people.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that didn't need a long set of hearings. I suspect that the same groups would object to it no matter how many hearings we had about Americans' right to life and liberty, their ability to assert what people would consider to be unalienable rights. We are not talking about a complex issue. We are talking about the vast majority of States have one rule, a few have a different rule, and as to Federal workers we are making the statement that we, their government, have decided that the answer if you're asked if you can record is, yes, and you don't even have to be asked.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your consideration, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2711, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2013

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 313) to amend title 5, United States Code, to institute spending limits and transparency requirements for Federal conference and travel expenditures, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 313

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 "Government Spending Accountability Act of 2013" or the "GSA Act of 2013".

SEC. 2. LIMITS AND TRANSPARENCY FOR CONFERENCE AND TRAVEL SPENDING.

(a) AMENDMENT.—Chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 5711 the following:

"§ 5712. Limits and transparency for conference and travel spending

"(a) CONFERENCE TRANSPARENCY AND SPENDING LIMITS.—

"(1) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF CONFERENCE MATERIALS.—Each agency shall post on the

public website of that agency detailed information on any presentation made by any employee of that agency at a conference (except to the extent the head of an agency excludes such information for reasons of national security or information described under section 552(b)) including—

“(A) the prepared text of any verbal presentation made; and

“(B) any visual, digital, video, or audio materials presented, including photographs, slides, and audio-visual recordings.

“(2) LIMITS ON AMOUNT EXPENDED ON A CONFERENCE.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under subparagraph (B), an agency may not expend more than \$500,000 to support a single conference.

“(B) EXCEPTION.—The head of an agency may waive the limitation under subparagraph (A) for a specific conference after making a determination that the expenditure is justified as the most cost-effective option to achieve a compelling purpose. The head of an agency shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on any waiver granted under this subparagraph, including the justification for such waiver.

“(C) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to preclude an agency from receiving financial support or other assistance from a private entity to pay or defray the costs of a conference the total cost of which exceeds \$500,000.

“(b) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE RULE.—An agency may not pay the travel expenses for more than 50 employees of that agency who are stationed in the United States, for any international conference, unless the Secretary of State determines that attendance for such employees is in the national interest, or the head of the agency determines that attendance for such employees is critical to the agency’s mission. The Secretary of State and the head of an agency shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report on any waiver granted under this subsection, including the justification for such waiver.

“(C) REPORTING ON TRAVEL AND CONFERENCE EXPENSES REQUIRED.—At the beginning of each quarter of each fiscal year, each agency shall post on the public website of that agency a report on each conference that costs more than \$10,000 for which the agency paid travel expenses during the preceding 3 months that includes—

“(1) the itemized expenses paid by the agency, including travel, lodging, and meal expenses, and any other agency expenditures to otherwise support the conference;

“(2) the primary sponsor of the conference;

“(3) the location of the conference;

“(4) the date of the conference;

“(5) a brief explanation of how the participation of employees from such agency at the conference advanced the mission of the agency;

“(6) the title of any employee, or any individual who is not a Federal employee, whose travel expenses or other conference expenses were paid by the agency;

“(7) the total number of individuals whose travel expenses or other conference expenses were paid by the agency; and

“(8) in the case of a conference for which that agency was the primary sponsor, a statement that—

“(A) describes the cost to the agency of selecting the specific conference venue;

“(B) describes why the location was selected, including a justification for such selection;

“(C) demonstrates the cost efficiency of the location;

“(D) provides a cost benefit analysis of holding a conference rather than conducting a teleconference; and

“(E) describes any financial support or other assistance from a private entity used to pay or defray the costs of the conference, and for each case where such support or assistance was used, the head of the agency shall include a certification that there is no conflict of interest resulting from such support or assistance.

“(d) FORMAT AND PUBLICATION OF REPORTS.—Each report posted on the public website under subsection (c) shall—

“(1) be in a searchable electronic format; and

“(2) remain on that website for at least 5 years after the date of posting.

“(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

“(1) AGENCY.—The term ‘agency’ has the meaning given that term under section 5701, but does not include the government of the District of Columbia.

“(2) CONFERENCE.—The term ‘conference’ means a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or event that—

“(A) is held for consultation, education, discussion, or training; and

“(B) is not held entirely at a Government facility.

“(3) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE.—The term ‘international conference’ means a conference occurring outside the United States attended by representatives of—

“(A) the Government of the United States; and

“(B) any foreign government, international organization, or foreign nongovernmental organization.”

(b) TECHNICAL AND CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 5711 the following:

“5712. Limits and transparency for conference and travel spending.”

(c) ANNUAL TRAVEL EXPENSE LIMITS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of each of fiscal years 2014 through 2018, an agency (as defined under section 5712(e) of title 5, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)) may not make, or obligate to make, expenditures for travel expenses, in an aggregate amount greater than 70 percent of the aggregate amount of such expenses for fiscal year 2010.

(2) EXEMPTIONS.—The agency may exclude certain travel expenses from the limitation under paragraph (1) only if the agency head determines that inclusion of such expenses would undermine national security, international diplomacy, health and safety inspections, law enforcement, or site visits required for oversight or investigatory purposes.

(3) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—In each of fiscal years 2014 through 2018, the head of each agency shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report containing—

(A) the justification for any expenses excluded (under paragraph (2)) from the limitation under paragraph (1); and

(B) the positive or negative impacts, if any, of the limitation under paragraph (1) on the agency’s mission, cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and ability to perform core functions.

(4) IDENTIFICATION OF TRAVEL EXPENSES.—

(A) RESPONSIBILITIES.—Not later than September 30, 2013, and after consultation with the Administrator of General Services and the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall establish guidelines for the determination of what expenses constitute travel expenses for purposes of this subsection. The guidelines shall identify specific expenses, and classes

of expenses, that are to be treated as travel expenses.

(B) EXEMPTION FOR MILITARY TRAVEL.—The guidelines required under subparagraph (A) shall exclude military travel expenses in determining what expenses constitute travel expenses. Military travel expenses shall include travel expenses involving military combat, the training or deployment of uniformed military personnel, and such other travel expenses as determined by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Administrator of General Services and the Director of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Last year, the public became aware of the now-infamous GSA Las Vegas conference that cost taxpayers some \$820,000.

In the wake of that public outcry, the Office of Management and Budget issued a May 2012 memo outlining new policies and procedures for Federal travel and conferences. In the memo, OMB told agency heads to reduce travel spending for fiscal year 2013 to 70 percent of the fiscal 2010 levels. Senior-level review was instituted for all events, with senior-level approval and public reporting for events costing some \$100,000 or more, and a general prohibition on events costing half a million or more, unless the agency signed a waiver.

The Oversight Committee learned that in fiscal year 2012 alone, nearly 900 Federal conferences costing in excess of \$100,000 were held. The total cost of these events exceeded \$340 million.

H.R. 313 codifies OMB’s travel and conference guidelines with some important changes. While exempting military travel, the bill eliminates loopholes in the OMB guidance in order to ensure that agencies actually achieve a 70 percent reduction in nonmilitary-related travel.

The bill also mandates transparency by requiring agencies to post online, on a quarterly basis, detailed, itemized reports of all conference spending. And it requires that materials presented at the conference by a Federal employee be made available online.

Last year, the House approved unanimously substantially similar legislation that was also reported from the Oversight Committee. I would like to thank Mr. FARENTHOLD for his leadership on this bill, and Mr. POCAN for

working with us at the committee markup to help make important improvements to this bill.

I urge all Members to support this good government and commonsense legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise in support of H.R. 313, as amended. I support the intent of this legislation to reduce wasteful travel and conference spending and to shine light on the Federal Government expenditures in those areas.

The recent instances of excessive spending at a 2010 Las Vegas conference held by the General Services Administration and two 2011 Orlando conferences hosted by the Veterans Affairs Department gave good cause for the introduction of this measure. I believe that safeguards and heightened congressional and public scrutiny are needed to prevent incidents like those from happening again.

This bill is similar to legislation that passed the House in the last Congress and similar to administration guidance issued to agencies. Legislation would require agencies to reduce travel spending by 30 percent below fiscal year 2010 levels in each of the next 5 fiscal years and limit expenditures on any single conference to \$500,000.

I also thank Chairman ISSA for working with us to make some changes to the bill to address some of our major concerns. We added language to the bill to allow agency heads or the Secretary of State to waive the 50 percent limit on the number of employees who may attend international conferences. This change was made to address concerns raised by Representatives RUSH HOLT, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, and others in the scientific community about the potential negative effect of the limit on the free and open exchange of scientific and technical knowledge.

We also established \$10,000 as the minimum threshold amount a conference would have to cost before agencies would be required to provide cost information in their quarterly reporting.

Lastly, we appreciate the addition of the language in the bill exempting travel expenses from the required 30 percent reduction when the reduction would undermine national security, international diplomacy, health and safety inspections of law enforcement, or site visits required for oversight investigations.

I believe that H.R. 313 has been greatly improved by the exchanges. I offer my support for this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to my distinguished colleague from the State of Texas (Mr. FARENTHOLD).

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the ranking member's support of this bill.

This is not an anti-travel, anti-conference bill. This is a commonsense

transparency and good government bill. It was designed to stop wasteful spending.

You hear a lot of talk here around Washington, D.C., about we've got to stop the waste, fraud, and abuse. Well, we are doing that here today with H.R. 313. What we are doing is saying if there is a government conference, it needs to be for government purposes and real work needs to be done.

We are not asking the taxpayers to foot the bill for a vacation for Federal employees. We don't need clowns, we don't need mind readers, we don't need a Star Trek video, we don't need pictures of agency representatives in a bathtub with a glass of wine.

We need Federal employees conducting Federal business and doing what the taxpayers are paying them to do. Many of these conferences are great opportunities for training, great opportunities in the scientific community to move forward with advancements. But what we've got to do is make sure taxpayers' money is not wasted, that it is spent wisely. We need a culture in this government where Federal employees, each and every one of them, know it is not their money they're spending; it's the hardworking American taxpayers' money that they are spending.

That's what we are doing here today. We are putting limits on the amount that can be spent. In certain cases, you can go over these limits, but we need to have someone held accountable for these conferences. So when you get into the big-dollar amounts, an agency head, somebody who is politically accountable, has to sign off for it, somebody who actually is thinking all the time about what is the public going to think about this.

This is a great solution we've crafted in a bipartisan manner that doesn't end conferences, but promotes responsible conferences.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 313.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlelady from Nevada (Ms. TITUS).

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for the time.

I would first respectfully correct the record because the GAO conference was not in Las Vegas; it was in Henderson, Nevada, which is in District 3.

Like my colleagues, I believe that government agencies should spend every cent in the most careful and responsible way possible, and it is our job as Members of Congress to ensure that all government spending is effective and efficient.

While there are still improvements that can be made, and I agree with many of the comments that have been issued on the floor already, Congress and the administration have already taken many steps to eliminate excessive travel, require transparency, and improve oversight.

I rise today, however, because I believe that H.R. 313 sends the wrong message about business travel. I am

proud to represent Las Vegas, one of the premier business destinations in the United States. Last year, we hosted some 21,000 meetings and conventions attended by almost 5 million business travelers. These business meetings supported 60,000 jobs with an economic impact of \$6.7 billion.

Business travel is an important aspect of the economy, with over \$250 billion in direct spending by business travelers, which supports 2.2 million jobs nationwide. Even in this age of technology, where lots of business is conducted via the Internet, small businesses across Nevada tell me all the time that the opportunity to meet face-to-face to discuss new programs, cultivate business at a trade show, or learn about new products and designs is just irreplaceable.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to cultivate this important aspect of our economy while also ensuring that our tax dollars are well spent.

□ 1345

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HECK).

Mr. HECK of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of reining in excessive government spending and waste, and I thank my colleague from Texas for his work on this important matter.

As the Representative who represents Henderson, Nevada, I am pleased Congress and the administration worked together to reduce wasteful government spending and to prevent flagrant abuses of taxpayer funds on lavish conferences and travel. These efforts will certainly increase oversight and transparency. However, I urge my colleagues to avoid those unnecessary restrictions on government travel which could significantly affect conference cities like Las Vegas and Henderson.

Despite the inexcusable actions of a few, government conferences can benefit the public and private sectors and contribute to our economic health. Cancelling conferences outright solves nothing. The cancellation of a 2013 Military Health System Conference to train military medical personnel actually cost the government more than \$800,000 in replacement expenses and lost revenue. I am concerned that those approving government conferences under these new standards may limit agency travel to specific geographic locations solely to avoid the perception of the misuse of taxpayer funds.

These decisions should not be about perception but should be based on cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and the best interests of taxpayers. That's why I co-sponsored H.R. 1880, the Protecting Resort Cities from Discrimination Act, to prohibit Federal agencies from implementing policies that discourage travel to perceived resort or vacation destinations. Cities like Las Vegas, Henderson, and Orlando are equipped with an abundance of affordable rooms and conference spaces, and independent studies

confirm that the per attendee cost of government conferences is nearly half that of similar private sector conferences, but these cities should not suffer from poor judgment by a handful of government workers.

Again, I strongly support the efforts to eliminate the waste and abuse of taxpayer funds. Federal travel and conference participation benefits our economy when done appropriately and responsibly. So I support this legislation, and I ask to continue to work together to encourage accountability and transparency for government travel to ensure conference cities like Las Vegas, Henderson, and others can continue to provide their valuable services.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support the legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my distinguished colleague from the State of Florida (Mr. Ross).

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Government Spending Accountability Act, which will rein in out-of-control government spending by providing much-needed reforms and transparency for Federal employee travel and government-sponsored conferences.

As someone who introduced similar legislation last year, I want to thank Chairman FARENTHOLD for his continued work on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, reports of lavish and out-of-control spending by various Federal agencies, most notably by the General Services Administration, have highlighted the need for serious reform for these types of fiscally irresponsible practices. However, other agencies have been responsible for carelessly wasting taxpayer funds as well.

One example of this waste took place an hour from my home in Lakeland, Florida. In 2011, the Department of Veterans Affairs held two human resources training conferences in Orlando, Florida, at a cost of \$6.1 million to the taxpayers. Last year, an inspector general report published within the Department of Veterans Affairs found that the Department conference planners allowed up to \$762,000 in unauthorized or wasteful spending. This included gifts, spa treatments, tickets for helicopter rides, and golf packages.

Mr. Speaker, the men and women in uniform are some of the best and proudest that America has to offer. They take an oath to uphold not only the Constitution of this United States but also to give the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. Here, the veterans administration agency, which is charged with making sure that their benefits are adequately and appropriately provided, has been indicted with wasting these taxpayer dollars. Unfortunately, at a time when veterans are waiting in line for benefits they fought and sacrificed to earn, taxpayers should not be subsidizing lavish hotel bills and golf outings.

Once again, I want to thank the chairman for introducing this legislation, and I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in passing this good government legislation.

Mr. MEADOWS. I want to thank the ranking member for his support of this legislation, and I urge all Members to support the passage of H.R. 313, as amended.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for making small changes to this legislation to address concerns that I raised about this bill last year. However, the premise of the bill remains the same and for that reason, I oppose H.R. 313, the so-called "Government Spending Accountability Act". H.R. 313 is fundamentally flawed because it would make significant changes to federal employees' ability to travel to conferences and meetings.

This bill institutes prohibitions and impediments that would hinder American scientists' ability to collaborate and communicate with scientists at other institutions and laboratories.

Although I appreciate the sponsors' efforts to ensure oversight on travel expenditures, I'm not sure they realize the impact that this legislation would have on science and technology, which is the engine of American innovation. The informal conversations, as well as the formal presentations and everything else that goes on between scientists from different institutions, from different countries, lead to new collaborations that have the promise of new discoveries. These are not fancy junkets.

Scientific conferences are critically important. For example, the American Chemical Society and, the American Physical Society have stated that the development of an anticancer drug was the result of collaboration between a team of scientists from three laboratories that took place at one of these conferences. This bill would hinder that kind of collaboration. In a time when the federal government should be making science a priority, passing a bill that would make scientists jump through hurdles and get around impediments would, in fact, weaken American scientists, weaken American science, and impede the ability of American scientists to innovate.

That is not wise. This is not the way to build our economy and to foster advancements in innovation. We should be investing more in research and development, which means, of course, investing in scientists, but also investing in their ability to pursue science.

Would Congress do better if we did not meet in person, if we stayed home and got on conference calls every once in a while? I don't think so. I think the gains that are made in good legislation that come from conferences, from working together as colleagues as we gather for votes, or in committees, are invaluable. The same can be said for scientific conferences—better innovation can occur when scientists meet together, face-to-face.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 313, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2579) to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for investigative leave requirements with respect to Senior Executive Service employees, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2579

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 "Government Employee Accountability Act".

SEC. 2. SUSPENSION FOR 14 DAYS OR LESS FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE EMPLOYEES.

Paragraph (1) of section 7501 of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"(1) 'employee' means—

"(A) an individual in the competitive service who is not serving a probationary or trial period under an initial appointment or who has completed 1 year of current continuous employment in the same or similar positions under other than a temporary appointment limited to 1 year or less; or

"(B) a career appointee in the Senior Executive Service who—

"(i) has completed the probationary period prescribed under section 3393(d); or

"(ii) was covered by the provisions of subchapter II of this chapter immediately before appointment to the Senior Executive Service;"

SEC. 3. INVESTIGATIVE LEAVE AND TERMINATION AUTHORITY FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE EMPLOYEES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 75 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SUBCHAPTER VI—INVESTIGATIVE LEAVE FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE EMPLOYEES

"§ 7551. Definitions

"For the purposes of this subchapter—

"(1) 'employee' has the meaning given such term in section 7541; and

"(2) 'investigative leave' means a temporary absence without duty for disciplinary reasons, of a period not greater than 90 days.

"§ 7552. Actions covered

"This subchapter applies to investigative leave.

"§ 7553. Cause and procedure

"(a)(1) Under regulations prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management, an agency may place an employee on investigative leave, without loss of pay and without charge to annual or sick leave, only for misconduct, neglect of duty, malfeasance, or misappropriation of funds.

"(2) If an agency determines, as prescribed in regulation by the Office of Personnel Management, that such employee's conduct is flagrant and that such employee intentionally engaged in such conduct, the agency may place such employee on investigative leave under this subchapter without pay.

"(b)(1) At the end of each 45-day period during a period of investigative leave implemented under this section, the relevant agency shall review the investigation into the employee with respect to the misconduct, neglect of duty, malfeasance, or misappropriation of funds.