

to be a cosponsor. This bill was introduced by the gentleman from New Jersey, the subcommittee's ranking member, Mr. PAYNE.

The bill amends the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to include, among the responsibilities of the Department of Homeland Security's Under Secretary for Management, achieving and maintaining interoperable communications among the Department's components.

H.R. 615 addresses the findings and recommendations of a November 2012 DHS Office of Inspector General report, which stated that the Department does not have the appropriate oversight or governance structure to ensure communications interoperability among its components. It is vital that the Department's components are able to effectively communicate day to day and, most importantly, during emergencies.

In response to the findings of this inspector general's report, I joined Chairman McCAUL and Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee Chairman PERRY in requesting a review of this issue by the Government Accountability Office. Their report, which was released in March, found that nearly 3 years after the inspector general's report, communications problems persist in the Department and among its components. In particular, Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement personnel reported to the GAO that the lack of interoperability in some cases along the border resulted in missed apprehensions and jeopardized agent safety.

My district is on the southwest border. I know the challenges our Border Patrol agents, CBP officers, and ICE agents face in meeting their vital missions. It is unacceptable that they lack the tools and training necessary to communicate with each other. This bill seeks to make this more of a priority at the headquarters level.

In order to ensure the Department is taking the necessary steps to achieve and maintain interoperable communications capabilities, H.R. 615 requires the Department's Under Secretary for Management to submit an interoperable communications strategy to the Committee on Homeland Security no later than 180 days after enactment and to periodically report to Congress on efforts to implement this strategy.

This bill passed the House in February by a vote of 379-0. I appreciate the swift action of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee under the leadership of my friend, Chairman JOHNSON. Their thoughtful additions have served to further improve this bill. I urge all Members to join me in supporting it.

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of the Senate amendment to H.R. 615, the Department of Homeland Security Interoperable Communications Act.

In November 2012, the inspector general of the Department of Homeland Security issued an assessment of the interoperable communications capability among DHS components. The inspector general found that, of the 479 field radios that attempted to communicate on a specific common channel, only one user could do so. That is a 99 percent failure rate.

In short, DHS, which is the Federal entity charged with providing guidance to State and local governments to improve interoperable emergency communications, was not practicing what it preached. The inspector general found that DHS' interoperable challenges were not technological in nature. Rather, they were attributed to the fact that there was no one leading the effort to drive changes in the field. Further, there were no policies in place to ensure that the 123,000 radio users at DHS understood how to use the communications equipment issued to them.

Throughout my tenure on the Committee on Homeland Security, I have repeatedly sought opportunities to drive home the message that interoperable communications are critical to the Homeland Security mission at the Federal, State, and local levels.

Addressing this fundamental operational challenge is consistent with the DHS Unity of Effort initiative. So it would seem that the timing is right for real progress. However, late last month, we learned from the inspector general that, nearly 3 years after the issuance of the first report, DHS' components' inability to communicate effectively on the DHS common channel persists and that DHS has not completed the corrective actions necessary to resolve the problem. The inspector general's most recent findings confirm that it is going to take directing the Department in law to get this done. That is why I was happy to support Ranking Member Donald Payne, Jr., when he introduced this legislation.

H.R. 615 would put DHS components on the path to achieving interoperable communications by directing the Department's Under Secretary for Management to develop a strategy to achieve interoperability. The taxpayers have spent \$430 million on interoperable communications capabilities at the Department so far. In this austere fiscal climate, we cannot afford to waste more money investing in communications capabilities when DHS lacks the policies that are sure to be effective.

With the help of full committee Chairman McCAUL and subcommittee Chairwoman MCSALLY, the Department of Homeland Security Interoperable Communications Act passed the House unanimously earlier this year. Subsequently, our Senate counterparts approved H.R. 615 by unanimous consent with some enhancements. I urge my colleagues to concur with the Senate amendment to H.R. 615 and send this bill to the President's desk.

The inspector general's report identifying the urgent interoperable commu-

nications problem at DHS came out 3 years ago. A comprehensive solution is long overdue. Unfortunately, the Department has still not implemented appropriate corrective action. I commend subcommittee Ranking Member PAYNE for introducing this important legislation and for his efforts to get it enacted into law. I urge my colleagues to concur with the Senate amendment of H.R. 615.

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

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

I, once again, urge my colleagues to support H.R. 615, which seeks to enhance interoperable communications at the Department of Homeland Security.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendment to the bill, H.R. 615.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the Senate amendment was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 28 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

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#### AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DENHAM) at 6 o'clock and 31 minutes p.m.

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

Passage of H.R. 1190, and motions to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 805 and H.R. 2576.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

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#### PROTECTING SENIORS' ACCESS TO MEDICARE ACT OF 2015

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on passage of the bill (H.R. 1190) to repeal the provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act providing for the Independent Payment Advisory Board,