

SGT. ZACHARY M. FISHER POST OFFICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 322) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 16105 Swingley Ridge Road in Chesterfield, Missouri, as the “Sgt. Zachary M. Fisher Post Office”, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 405, nays 0, not voting 29, as follows:

[Roll No. 507]
YEAS—405

Abraham
Adams
Aderholt
Aguilar
Allen
Amash
Ashford
Babin
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Benishkek
Bera
Beyer
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (MI)
Black
Blackburn
Blum
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Bost
Boustany
Boyle, Brendan
F.
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Brat
Bridenstine
Brooks (IN)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter (GA)
Carter (TX)
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu, Judy
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clawson (FL)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Comstock
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper

Costa
Costello (PA)
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Curbelo (FL)
Davis (CA)
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
Desaulnier
DesJarlais
Deutsch
Diaz-Balart
F.
Dingell
Doggett
Dold
Donovan
Doyle, Michael
F.
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers (NC)
Emmer (MN)
Engel
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxo
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garrett
Gibbs
Gibson
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Graham

Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (LA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffith
Grothman
Guinta
Guthrie
Gutiérrez
Hahn
Hanna
Hardy
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hice, Jody B.
Higgins
Hill
Himes
Hinojosa
Holding
Honda
Hoyer
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurd (TX)
Hurt (VA)
Israel
Issa
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Jenkins (KS)
Jenkins (WV)
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Katko
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (MS)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Knight
Kuster
Labrador
LaHood
LaMalfa

Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latta
Lawrence
Lee
Levin
Lewis
Lieu, Ted
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loeb sack
Lofgren
Loudermilk
Love
Lowenthal
Lowe
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham
(NM)
Lujan, Ben Ray
(NM)
Lummis
Lynch
MacArthur
Maloney, Sean
Marino
Massie
Matsui
McCarthy
McCaul
McClintock
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McKinley
McMorris
Rodgers
McNerney
McSally
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Meng
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Mooney (WV)
Moore
Moulton
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (PA)
Napolitano
Neal
Neugebauer
Newhouse
Noem
Nolan
Norcross
Nugent
Nunes
O'Rourke
Olson
Palazzo

NOT VOTING—29

Amodei
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Bishop (UT)
Brooks (AL)
Buchanan
Buck
Cartwright
Davis, Danny
Grijalva
Heck (NV)
Hudson
Jolly
Jones
Long
Maloney,
Carolyn
Marchant
McCollum

□ 1511

Mr. RANGEL changed his vote from “present” to “yea.”

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Sherman
Shimkus
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Speier
Stefanik
Stivers
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takai
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Torres
Trott
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walker
Walorski
Walters, Mimi
Walz
Wasserman
Schultz
Ruiz
Waters, Maxine
Watson Coleman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westerman
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IA)
Young (IN)
Zeldin
Zinke

RESPONSIBLY AND PROFESSIONALLY INVIGORATING DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2015

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. 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 H.R. 348.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE of Texas). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia? There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 420 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 348.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1514

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 consideration of the bill (H.R. 348) to provide for improved coordination of agency actions in the preparation and adoption of environmental documents for permitting determinations, and for other purposes, with Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

□ 1515

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

America's voters sent the 114th Congress to Washington to help turn around this Nation's struggling economy.

For more than 6½ long years, America's families and workers have been waiting for the Obama administration to join with Congress to pass measures that will adequately restore jobs and growth to our land. The job clearly has not been finished.

Throughout the Obama administration, America's growth rate has been historically anemic. The truest measure of unemployment—the rate that includes both discouraged workers and those who cannot find a full-time job—remains over 10 percent. Our labor force participation rate remains mired among historic lows.

Median real household income, meanwhile, is 5 percent lower than in June 2009, when the recession officially ended. Median incomes are supposed to rise during economic recoveries, not fall. The Obama administration has managed to buck the historical trend.

However, the President at least pays lip service to the need to unleash construction projects. If one thinks back

to the start of the Obama administration, one can remember President Obama's plan to solve the Great Recession with the nearly \$1 trillion stimulus bill.

The stimulus was supposed to work, according to the President, because America had shovel-ready projects from which new, good-paying jobs would be created once the stimulus was enacted and the money was doled out.

While many, including myself, disagreed with the fundamental premise of the stimulus bill, the President blamed his stimulus bill's failure on the lack of shovel-ready projects. As he put it, "Shovel-ready was not as shovel-ready as we expected."

Mr. Chairman, that is the problem that today's legislation—the RAPID Act—is intended to solve.

This legislation fulfills post-stimulus bill calls of leaders in Congress, the White House, the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness, and the private sector to streamline the review of Federal construction permit applications. It contains well-thought-out, balanced reforms that provide for more efficient and effective decision-making.

Stated succinctly, the RAPID Act gives lead Federal agencies more responsibility to conduct and conclude efficient interagency reviews of permit requests, demands that any entity challenging a final permitting decision in court first have presented the substance of its claims during the agency review process, and requires that lawsuits challenging permitting decisions be filed within 6 months of the decisions, not 6 years, as the law currently allows.

These are simple, but powerful, reforms that will allow good projects to move forward more quickly, delivering high-quality jobs and improvements to Americans' daily lives.

Prior iterations of the RAPID Act passed the House three times during the 112th and 113th Congresses, each time with bipartisan support.

Once enacted, this legislation will help to create millions of high-paying jobs and make government decision-making more efficient and effective.

Importantly, it will also continue to ensure that the impacts of new projects on the environment can be considered responsibly before permitting decisions are made.

I thank Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law Subcommittee Chairman MARINO of Pennsylvania for introducing this legislation.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote for the RAPID Act.

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

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

My colleagues, I rise in rather strong opposition to the measure before us, H.R. 348, the Responsibly and Professionally Invigorating Development Act of 2015, or its nickname, the RAPID Act.

H.R. 348 has a number of flaws. I won't try to go into each and every one

of them. Most critically, this measure would jeopardize public safety and health by prioritizing project approval over meaningful analysis that is currently required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

By giving the proponents of construction projects greater control over the environmental approval process, this bill is the equivalent of giving Wall Street the authority to write its own regulations for financial responsibility. The bill accomplishes this result in several respects.

To begin with, under the guise of streamlining the approval process, H.R. 348 forecloses potentially critical input from Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as from members of the public, to comment on environmentally sensitive construction projects that are federally funded or that require Federal approval.

The bill also imposes hard and fast deadlines that may be unrealistic under certain circumstances. Moreover, if an agency fails to meet these unrealistic deadlines, the bill simply declares that a project must be deemed approved regardless of whether the agency has thoroughly assessed the task. This is an embarrassment, my friends.

As a result, H.R. 348 could allow projects that put public health and safety at risk to be approved before the safety review is completed.

This failing of the bill, along with some others, explains why the administration and the President's Council on Environmental Quality, along with more than 40 respected environmental groups, vigorously oppose this legislation before us today.

These organizations include Public Citizen, the League of Conservation Voters, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, and The Wilderness Society. Likewise, the administration has appropriately issued a veto threat.

Stating that the bill will increase litigation, regulatory delays, and potentially force agencies to approve a project if the review and analysis cannot be completed before the proposed arbitrary deadlines, the administration warns that, if H.R. 348 ever became law, it would lead to more confusion and delay, limit public participation in the permitting process, and, ultimately, hamper economic growth.

Another concern, among many, that I have with this measure is that it is a flawed solution in search of an imaginary problem, and that is not just my opinion.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service, for instance, states that highway construction project delays based on environmental requirements stem not from the National Environmental Policy Act, but from laws other than the National Environmental Policy Act.

In fact, the Congressional Research Service found that the primary source of approval delays for these projects

are more often tied to local or State and project-specific factors, primarily local or State agency priorities, project funding levels, local opposition to a project, project complexity, or late changes in project scope.

Undoubtedly, the so-called RAPID Act will make the process less clear and less protective of public health and safety.

My final major concern with this bill is that, rather than streamlining the environmental review process, which we need to do, it will sow utter confusion.

H.R. 348 does this by creating a separate, but only partly parallel, environmental review process for construction projects, which will cause confusion, delay, and litigation.

As I have noted, the changes to the National Environmental Policy Act's review process, as contemplated by the measure before us today, apply only to certain construction projects.

The National Environmental Policy Act, on the other hand, applies to a broad panoply of Federal actions, including fishing, hunting, and grazing permits, land management plans, Base Realignment and Closure activities, and treaties.

As a result of the bill, there could potentially be two different environmental review processes for the same project.

For instance, the bill's requirements would apply to the construction of a nuclear reactor, but not to its decommissioning or to the transportation and storage of its spent fuel.

Rather than improving the environmental review process, the measure before us will complicate it and generate more litigation. More importantly, this bill is yet another effort by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to undermine regulatory protections.

As with all of the other regulatory bills, this measure is a thinly disguised effort to hobble the ability of Federal agencies to do the work the Congress requires that it does.

For those reasons, I urge my colleagues to strenuously oppose this seriously flawed bill.

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

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MARINO), the chief sponsor of this legislation and the chairman of the Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law Subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. MARINO. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Chairman, once again, my good friends on the other side think we need more government, more EPA overreach, more regulation, to continue the \$19 trillion of debt that we have and to continue the flawed job opportunities of this administration's over the past 6 years.

Once again, today we consider the RAPID Act. As the gentleman from Virginia stated, during the 112th and

113th Congresses, the House passed this bill on three separate occasions in a bipartisan fashion.

Once again, we are considering a number of important regulatory reforms that present the potential for immediately impactful economic growth across our Nation.

Our Federal permitting process is undeniably broken. Duplicative environmental reviews have clogged decision-making for years.

Although recent studies have shown that, on average, an environmental impact study will take 3 to 4 years, the permitting process for many projects takes years more or, sadly, even decades.

Even more disappointing are indications that average environmental review times are increasing by over a month per year.

Furthermore, final decision-making has been driven by political whims rather than by the merits of any particular project that would be borne through economic growth and job creation.

Political pressure should never impede projects of worth that would get Americans back to work. One recent study found that 7 years of delay on the Keystone pipeline have kept us from realizing nearly \$175 billion in potential economic activity. At a time when true economic recovery lags and more Americans become disheartened and leave the workforce, such delays are unacceptable.

The RAPID Act reforms remove government obstructions from the equation by implementing hard deadlines for environmental review, and they shorten the window for judicial review. It doesn't take review away. It shortens it to a reasonable period of time.

We cannot delay while our infrastructure—from highways and bridges to transmission lines and waterways—crumbles around us in America's counties, towns, and cities.

I look forward to working with our colleagues in the Senate to bring this bill to the President's desk, and I hope that we can get this country working again.

Federal agencies and departments and employees have to be held accountable just like we are in private industry. They cannot sit back and let these permits and these issues stack up on their desks while they play games on their computers.

I have hope that we can get this bill through and the country working again. Please support the RAPID Act.

□ 1530

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chair, I yield 8 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON), the ranking subcommittee member.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Chair, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 348, the Responsibly and Professionally Invigorating Development Act, or the RAPID Act. But if I had my druthers, I would change it to the "Responsibly

and Professionally Invigorating Diver-sion Act," or RAPID Act.

I would say that it is a diversion because we have got important work to do in this Chamber, Mr. Chair. Everybody knows that we are approaching the end of the fiscal year. It will be here in 6 short days.

During this whole month of September—we are at September 24 today—we have had a total of 8 legislative days during this month, knowing that we are coming up to the end of the fiscal year and we need to pass a spending bill to keep the government open and operating. We have been knowing this.

We spent 6 weeks in August, from July to September, a total of about 6 weeks at home lounging while the Nation's business in Washington, D.C., went undone. We have spent a total of 8 legislative days out of the 24 days in September doing everything other than addressing the looming issue, which is the coming, or impending, government shutdown.

Now, we are here today. We just took one vote. This is the first legislative day of this week. We have got one business day left. The first legislative day, after hearing from the Pope, we have just had our last vote for the day. It was our one and only vote for the day, and it was to rename a post office.

We are coming up on the government shutdown, and what are we dealing with? Instead of dealing with the Nation's finances, we are dealing with this RAPID Act, which, as I said, is a diversion from the real duty that we need to be taking care of today.

H.R. 348, the RAPID Act, is a misguided attempt to sow widespread confusion and delay in the review and permitting process under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA.

For over 40 years, the approval process for projects under NEPA has saved time, money, and protected the environment, which the Pope spoke of our need to protect today. In fact, since NEPA was enacted, the U.S. economy has not contracted. It has actually tripled in size from just over \$5 trillion to more than \$16 trillion.

Among other things, NEPA requires agencies to prepare a detailed environmental review for proposals relating to "major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment." NEPA's purpose is to provide a framework for wide-ranging input from all affected interests when a Federal agency conducts an environmental review of a proposed project.

H.R. 348, the so-called RAPID Act, upends this review process in three ways:

First, H.R. 348 carves out a separate environmental review process for construction projects. Currently, NEPA applies to a broad range of Federal projects, including hunting permits, land management plans, military base realignment and closure activities, and treaties. In contrast, H.R. 348 only applies to a subset of these Federal

projects, creating more regulatory complexity in the permitting system, not less.

Second, section (c) of the RAPID Act allows any project sponsor to prepare an environmental document in lieu of such analysis by the lead agency. It is not difficult to imagine the shortcomings of allowing corporations, which seek to maximize shareholder value, to sit in the driver's seat on environmental policy. In fact, that is why we have such environmental degradation today.

During a legislative hearing on H.R. 348, Amit Narang, a regulatory policy advocate for Public Citizen, compared section (c) to "asking big banks to determine the costs and benefits of new Wall Street reform rules, or big energy companies to determine the costs and benefits of new climate change or air pollution measures."

The inherent conflict of interest built into this section reveals the bill's clear design to allow project sponsors to manipulate the NEPA permit approval process to the greatest extent possible. It is clear that not only does this Republican bill task the fox with guarding the henhouse, it would also have him install the chicken wire as well.

Finally, under section (i) of H.R. 348, if an agency fails to meet the unrealistic deadlines mandated by H.R. 348, the bill would automatically greenlight a Federal construction project, regardless of whether or not the agency has thoroughly reviewed the project's risks.

Even if I were to set aside these concerns, it is difficult for me to look past the complete lack of empirical data supporting the premise of the RAPID Act, which is that agency compliance with NEPA is the cause of delays in approving permits.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service reported in 2012 that project approval delays based on environmental requirements are not caused by NEPA, but "are more often tied to local/State and project-specific factors, primarily local/State agency priorities, project funding levels, local opposition to a project, project complexity, or late changes in project scope."

Similarly, Dinah Bear, who served as the general counsel for the White House Council on Environmental Quality which oversees NEPA's implementation, for over 20 years under both Republican and Democratic administrations, testified in the 112th Congress that most delays in the environmental review process are not the result of NEPA, but due to other factors entirely unrelated to NEPA.

In other words, the RAPID Act does nothing to address the lack of adequate funds allocated to Federal construction projects or State-based barriers to the timely completion of construction projects, which are two of the most common delays and have nothing to do with regulatory permits under NEPA.

So, therefore, I urge my colleagues to oppose this misguided legislation.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE), a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Chair, I thank Chairman GOODLATTE, Mr. MARINO, and Mr. SMITH for working on this important bill and bringing it to the House floor.

Speeding up the regulatory process in the United States is an important issue in keeping America competitive. The methodical, slow, snail-paced decision or lack of decision process of the EPA to make a decision on whether or not to approve a project is absurd.

The RAPID Act addresses the problem of extensive requirements and growing delays in Federal permitting and approvals for construction projects stemming from multiple agencies, excessive requirements, and unnecessary lawsuits.

According to an April 2014 report issued by the GAO, the average preparation time for the required environmental impact statement finalized in 2012 was over 4½ years. Now, the environmental impact statement is just the first requirement in getting a permit.

Four-and-a-half years—World War II took less time than it takes the EPA to make a decision on whether or not to approve a project. They just continue to study and study and study. Mr. Chair, it is about time for the EPA to pick a horse and ride it, make a decision about these projects.

I am not going to talk in theory. I am going to talk about an actual project down in my congressional district.

The Sabine-Neches Waterway, most Americans have never heard of it. The Sabine-Neches waterway is what some of us call “the other Texas international border.” It is the waterway between Louisiana and Texas. We have been wanting, since 1997, to deepen that 40-foot waterway to 48 feet. That is just 8 feet. We just want to make it a little deeper so ships can come in and off-load their cargo and off-load their fuel.

What they are doing now, they can't come in with a full load of fuel on those tankers. They have to off-load it, sometimes 20 percent, in the Gulf of Mexico and then bring in the rest. That costs money. We just want 8 feet.

So in 1997, my predecessors asked the EPA for an environmental impact statement and finally got that impact statement. It took 20 years to get an impact statement. I have had 11 grandkids since I have been in Congress, and that impact statement has been pending all that time.

We just want 8 feet. Is it okay? The EPA finally made a decision, but yet we still haven't started moving dirt.

The original project was about \$600 million. Now, it is about \$1.3 billion, and we still don't have that extra 8 feet. Why? Because the bureaucrats can't make a decision. Delay, delay, delay.

That is the name of the EPA: Delay, Delay, Delay. All this bill does, it says

to this bureaucracy, study the information, reach a conclusion, and approve the project if it ought to be approved so America can be competitive worldwide. But, no, the other side says: Well, we need more studies; we need more information.

Mr. Chair, if Teddy Roosevelt would have had to deal with the EPA in building the Panama Canal, it would have never been built because of all the regulatory requirements—some unnecessary, in my opinion.

So let's approve the RAPID Act. Let's get America working again. The Sabine-Neches Waterway has numerous refineries on it. It is the energy hub of the United States. We just want 8 feet, Mr. Chair. That is all we want. Pick a horse and ride it. The EPA needs to get their act together.

And that is just the way it is.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chair, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. TED LIEU).

Mr. TED LIEU of California. Mr. Chair, I rise to oppose H.R. 348, also known as the RAPID Act. This bill will rapidly cause environmental degradation.

Under this bill, if it became law, you could have projects that harm the environment that are deemed approved, even if the review process was not yet completed. That is crazy. Keep in mind, we have had over 60 straight months of job creation under the Obama administration. Those are the facts.

This bill is written in such a way that it will cause confusion. It will cause increased delays and limit public involvement in this important process. It is also unscientific.

There is a provision in this bill that says we cannot count the social cost of carbon. Now, I believe in a free market, and I believe that that has made America strong, but we can't have government artificially come in and say we are going to say things are costs and things are not costs when it is not scientifically based.

We know that carbon has done a lot to increase climate change and caused global warming. That is why I, along with Representatives PETERS, POLIS, and LOWENTHAL, have introduced an amendment to put that language back in. We can't just say stop talking and ignore carbon.

Keep in mind, just a few hours ago, Pope Francis came in to a joint session of Congress and told us to really revert and look at what we have done in terms of causing environmental degradation.

□ 1545

Now, just a few hours later, we are back to attacking the environment. This is not right.

I urge that we not support the RAPID Act.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to myself to say to the gentleman from California that we may have 60 straight months of in-

creased job creation, but the average American worker is making 5 percent less than they were before those 60 months began. The reason is that we are overregulating our economy.

If we are really going to create jobs, we have got to have the infrastructure to do it. We have got to have the projects like were just described by Congressman POE of Texas.

Just 8 more feet of depth would bring a lot more jobs to east Texas and to Louisiana by being able to bring that product further up inland.

These kind of projects require careful environmental assessment, but it doesn't require assessment that takes 20 years to take place. It should take place in a much more limited period of time.

This bill helps to encourage focusing the mind on what needs to get done. That includes taking careful consideration of the environment, but it doesn't include delay, delay, delay.

Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HARDY), a member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and the Committee on Natural Resources, both of which understand the importance of these projects.

Mr. HARDY. Mr. Chairman, before I had the privilege of being elected to the 114th Congress, I spent more than four decades in the construction industry.

After growing up as a fifth-generation son of a farmer and rancher, I set out to learn the trades and acquire the skills that would one day allow me to support myself and my family.

Over the course of those four decades in construction, I learned what it takes to start and run a successful business and how to create quality, good-paying jobs.

I also learned the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of our labor in the roads, bridges, and dams we built and how they define the communities we serve.

Mr. Chairman, small construction businesses like the one I used to own are struggling all across America from Federal bureaucracy that is rife with delays, duplication, and uncertainty.

I can speak from firsthand experience about construction projects that have ground to a halt as resources are redirected to navigate the onerous NEPA process.

On projects like the ones I used to manage, NEPA delays meant idled equipment, mass layoffs, and millions of dollars going towards compliance. These are sunk costs on the macro level and will continue to hold our economy back.

We need to get smart about environment protection and to ensure that we do it in ways that allow businesses to thrive. H.R. 348, the RAPID Act, will go a long way toward achieving that goal.

Mr. Chairman, at a time when our Nation's infrastructure is crumbling

and far too many are in search of quality employment, we have the responsibility to give manufacturers, construction workers, and other engines of economic growth the certainty they desperately need to create high-paying jobs.

I urge my colleagues to vote “yes” on the RAPID Act.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield an additional 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON), a distinguished member of our committee.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, my friend, Chairman GOODLATTE, bemoaned the fact that, over the last 64 straight months of job growth under the Obama administration, wages have remained stagnant.

That is true except for the wages of the top 10 percent, and specifically the top 1 percent, which have gone through the roof despite what he calls overregulation.

We continue to have the problem of income disparity that Pope Francis mentioned today. It is unrelated to this issue of regulations which are there to protect people. They, in fact, protect people and they protect our environment.

We have had a speaker today come in and talk about a dredging project that was delayed because of NEPA, but, actually, the truth of the matter is that that project was delayed due to lack of funding. Funding for the project was only authorized last year.

While the Republicans in Congress sit around and talk about how much the regulatory agencies study and study and study, what we do in Congress is simply ignore the funding needs for infrastructure in this country, which is what that dredging project was all about.

I have got a project down in Georgia, the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project, which was estimated to cost \$652 million to complete.

But prior to the passage of the Water Resources Reform and Development Act last year, the Federal Government had only provided \$1.28 million—\$1.28 million—less than 1 percent.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. LAMALFA). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, let's take it back to the year 2011 with the Ryan Budget Control Act, which imposed sequestration on the Federal Government, cutting both defense and nondefense spending 10 percent across the board.

We can't have it both ways. If we are not going to fund, we have to admit that that is the reason these projects are not getting done. Don't blame it on NEPA.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I am prepared to close. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Members of the committee, do not be misled by the title of this bill. Rather than effectuating real reforms to the process by which Federal agencies undertake environmental impact reviews, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, this measure before us will actually result in making the process less responsible, less professional, and less accountable.

These kinds of attempts are not new to this session of Congress. Accordingly, I urge that my colleagues carefully consider the discussion on this measure and oppose H.R. 348.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT OPPOSE H.R. 348, THE
RAPID ACT

Alaska Wilderness League, American Rivers, Center for Biological Diversity, Citizens for Global Solutions, Clean Air Task Force, Clean Air Council, Clean Water Action, Conservation Colorado, Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship, Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, EDF Action, Environmental Law and Policy Center, Epic—Environmental Protection Information Center, Energy Action Coalition, Friends of the Earth, Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy, Green Latinos, Kentucky Heartwood.

Klamath Forest Alliance, Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center, KyotoUSA, League of Conservation Voters, Los Padres ForestWatch, Marine Conservation Institute, Montana Environmental Information Center, National Parks Conservation Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, New Energy Economy, New Jersey Sierra Club, Oceana, Ocean Conservation Research, Public Citizen, Rachel Carson Council, Safe Climate Campaign, Sierra Club, Southern Environmental Law Center, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now, SustainUS.

Union of Concerned Scientists, Western Environmental Law Center, The Wilderness Society.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2015.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of our millions of members and activists, we are writing to urge you to oppose H.R. 348 the misleadingly named “Responsible and Professionally Invigorating Development Act of 2015.” Instead of improving the permitting process, the bill will severely undermine the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and, consequently, the quality and integrity of federal agency decisions.

The National Environmental Policy Act plays a critical role in ensuring that projects are carried out in a transparent, collaborative, and responsible manner. NEPA simply requires federal agencies to assess the environmental, economic, and public health impacts of proposals, solicit the input of all affected stakeholders, and disclose their findings publicly before undertaking projects that may significantly affect the environment. Critically, NEPA recognizes that the public—which includes industry, citizens, local and state governments, and business owners—can make important contributions by providing unique expertise. NEPA also gives a voice to the most impacted and underrepresented, especially to the most vulnerable communities who usually have to bear the most burden of where federal projects are proposed in the first place. However, H.R. 348 strikes at these core purposes of NEPA by systematically prioritizing speed of decisions and project approval over the public interest.

Studies on the causes of delay in the permitting process reveal that the primary cause of delay is not the NEPA process. Rather, as multiple studies by the Govern-

ment Accountability Office and the Congressional Research Service have pointed out, the principal causes of delay in permitting rest outside the NEPA process entirely and are attributable to other factors such as lack of funding, project complexity, and local opposition to the project. The RAPID Act ignores the true causes of delay, and instead, focuses on institutionalizing dangerous “reforms” that restrict public input, limit review of the environmental and economic impacts of projects, and that create more, not less, bureaucracy. Provisions in the RAPID Act, such as the following, will create more delays in permitting, result in less flexibility in the process, and tilt the entire permitting process towards shareholder interest, not the public interest. For example, the bill:

Places Arbitrary Limitations on Environmental Reviews—Section 560(i) of the bill threatens to undermine NEPA's goal of informed decision-making and the agency's role of acting in the public interest. It sets arbitrary deadlines on environmental reviews of permits, licenses, or other applications—regardless of the possible economic, health, or environmental impacts. Consequently, it puts communities at risk by promoting rushed and faulty decisions.

Limits Consideration of Alternatives—Section 560(g) strikes at what CEQA regulations describe as “the heart of the NEPA process” by restricting the range of reasonable alternatives to be considered by an agency.

Creates Serious Conflicts of Interests—Section 560(c) blurs the distinct roles of private entities and agencies in agency decisions by allowing private project sponsors with stakes in the decision to prepare environmental review documents which creates inherent conflicts of interest and thus jeopardizes the integrity of the decision-making process.

Leading to Unanticipated Delays—The bill forces stakeholders into court preemptively simply to preserve their right to judicial review. The bill also limits the public's judicial access to challenge and address faulty environmental reviews which in turn is likely to increase the controversy and the amount of litigation derived from the permitting process which in turn could add to project delays.

Denies the Impacts of Climate Change—Section 560(k) of the bill prohibits any considerations of the Social Cost of Carbon (SCC), which the EPA and other federal agencies use to estimate the economic damages associated with specific projects and their related carbon dioxide emissions. The tool is critical for the public to understand the true benefits and costs of a project. Ignoring climate change puts critical infrastructure, tax payer dollars, and local communities at risk.

Provisions such as these and many more in the RAPID Act will only serve to increase delay and confusion around the environmental review process. We believe compromising the quality of environmental review and limiting the role of the public is the wrong approach.

Far from being broken, the National Environmental Policy Act has proven its worth as an invaluable tool. It ensures that the public, developers, and agencies have a reliable template for consistent and fair proposal assessment for major projects that may impact federal resources. The RAPID Act contradicts and jeopardizes decades of experience gained from enacting this critical environmental law. Further, it tips the balance away from informed decisions and public oversight, jeopardizing the public's ability to participate in how public resources will be managed. Please oppose this unnecessary and overreaching piece of legislation and vote “no” on the RAPID Act.

Although no amendment would remedy the problems with the underlying bill, we make the following vote recommendations on amendments offered to the RAPID Act.

Vote no on Goodlatte (R-VA) #1—This amendment would prompt ill-informed decisions by limiting the role of cooperating agencies in the environmental review process. It would also severely limit the public's ability to use the courts their rights by requiring eventual plaintiffs to participate in drastically shortened comment periods and administrative proceedings that, in many cases, agencies do not provide.

Vote yes on Peters (D-CA) #2—This amendment ensures that the true impacts of climate change are considered by allowing agencies to consider the social costs of carbon when conducting environmental reviews. Agencies should be free to incorporate the social cost of carbon into the agency decision making process, which will result in better informed and responsible decisions that safely invest taxpayer dollars by taking into account climate change, the fundamental environmental issue of our time.

Vote yes on Jackson Lee (D-TX) #3—This amendment will undo one of the more pernicious provisions in the H.R. 348 which, in cases where an agency fails to meet arbitrary deadlines prescribed by the bill, projects are simply deemed approved regardless of their economic, health, or environmental impacts. The bill, without this amendment, puts communities at risk by green-lighting projects without fully considering environmental impacts or the opinions of those who will be impacted the most.

Vote yes on Jackson Lee (D-TX) #4—This amendment maintains national security by undoing hasty shortcuts in the permitting process and rightly ensuring a full review for projects that could be potential targets for terrorist attacks. This amendment wisely ensures that shortcutting critical federal review of projects does not apply those projects that most need informed decisions because of the tremendous impacts they may have on our national security.

Vote yes on Johnson (D-GA) #5—This amendment rightly ensures that nothing in the bill will limit input of affected stakeholders, local governments, private property owners, or business owners.

Vote yes on Dingell (D-MI) #6—This amendment would prevent project approvals under the arbitrary timelines set forth in the bill if the project under consideration would limit access to or opportunities for hunting or fishing or would impact threatened or endangered species. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife related recreation contributes more than \$140 billion dollars to the U.S. economy and supports thousands of jobs connected to fishing, hunting, and the observance of wildlife.

Vote yes on Gallego (D-AZ) #8—This amendment preserves meaningful input by local governments and tribal officials on projects affecting their communities by allowing them to request extensions of the arbitrary deadlines in the bill.

Vote yes on Grijalva (D-AZ) #9—The shortcutting of meaningful public input and review of a project's impacts under the RAPID Act could potentially lead to disproportionate impacts on low-income communities and communities of color. This amendment ensures such impacts are carefully addressed during the review of project alternatives.

Vote yes on Lowenthal (D-CA) #10—The truncated review procedures under the RAPID Act would potentially apply to construction projects of enormous size, scope, and complexity. Climate change poses severe threats to the health, safety, and economies of local communities through the increased

risks of floods, fire and severe weather. This amendment ensures federal agencies consider these impacts and construct projects that are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Vote no on Gosar (R-AZ) #11—This amendment would broaden one of the most damaging provisions of the bill which prevents Federal agencies from considering the true costs of climate change, putting communities and tax-payer dollars at risk.

Whatever the outcome of these amendments, we urge a no vote on final passage.

Sincerely,

Leah Donahey, Senior Campaign Director, Alaska Wilderness League; Jim Bradley, Vice President, Policy and Government Relations, American Rivers; Bill Snape, Senior Counsel, Center for Biological Diversity; Tony Fleming, Campaigns Director, Citizens for Global Solutions; Joseph Otis Minott, Executive Director & Chief Counsel, Clean Air Council; Conrad Schneider, Advocacy Director, Clean Air Task Force; Lynn Thorp, National Campaigns Director, Clean Water Action; Luke Schafer, West Slope Advocacy Director, Conservation Colorado; David Jenkins, President, Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship; Raul Garcia, Associate Legislative Counsel, Earthjustice; Elizabeth B. Thompson, President, EDF Action; Lydia Avila, Executive Director, Energy Action Coalition; Karen E. Torrent, Esq., Federal Legislative Director, Environmental Law and Policy Center; Natalynne DeLapp, Executive Director, Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center; Marissa Knodel, Climate Campaigner, Friends of the Earth; Mark Magana, President, Green Latinos; Colette Pichon Battle, Esq., Executive Director, Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy; Jim Scheff, Director, Kentucky Heartwood; Kimberly Baker, Executive Director, Klamath Forest Alliance; Mary Beth Beetham, Director of Legislative Affairs, Defenders of Wildlife; George Sexton, Conservation Director, Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center; Tom Kelly, Executive Director, KyotoUSA; Zach Drennen, Government Affairs Associate, League of Conservation Voters; Jeff Kuyper, Executive Director, Los Padres ForestWatch; Michael Gravitz, Director of Policy and Legislation, Marine Conservation Institute; Anne Hedges, Deputy Director, Montana Environmental Information Center; Craig D. Obey, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs, National Parks Conservation Association; Sharon Buccino, Director, Lands & Wildlife Program, Natural Resources Defense Council; Mariel Nanasi, Executive Director, New Energy Economy; Jeff Tittel, Director, New Jersey Sierra Club; Jacqueline Savitz, Vice President, U.S. Oceans, Oceana; Michael Stocker, Director, Ocean Conservation Research; David J. Arkush, Managing Director, Climate Program, Public Citizen; Rober K. Musil, Ph.D., M.P.H., President, Rachel Carson Council, Inc.; Daniel Becker, Director, Safe Climate Campaign; Liz Martin Perera, Climate Policy Director, Sierra Club; Navis A. Bermudez, Deputy Legislative Director, Southern Environmental Law Center; Alan Journet, Co-Facilitator, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now; Adam Hasz, Chair, SustainUS; Andrew Rosenberg, Director, Center for Science and Democracy, Union of Concerned Scientists; Katy Siddall, Director of Government Relations, Energy, The

Wilderness Society; Erik Schlenker-Goodrich, Executive Director, Western Environmental Law Center.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Chairman, first, to the gentleman from Georgia, let me just say that the Water Resources Development Act, which passed this House, has in it the same streamlining provisions of the permitting processes for the projects that it would fund that are based on the ideas in this bill.

Why? Because we know that, just because we come up with the funds for something, those funds can be churned and churned and churned year after year after year in the permitting process and never ever get to a permit so the underlying construction can take place in Texas or Savannah, Georgia, or Virginia, or all of the other places where infrastructure projects are needed.

Part of the enormous cost of it is the enormous process that we go through and the length of that process and the review and review and review that never gets to a decision.

During the debate over this bill this term and last, we have heard several false alarms from my friends on the other side of the aisle. For example, we have heard that the bill does not allow enough time for environmental reviews to be completed.

But, with all due respect, the bill, when necessary, allows as much time for the completion of an environmental impact statement as it took our Nation to win World War II. Surely that is time enough.

We have heard that the bill will generate more litigation because there may be litigation over what its new terms mean, but that argument can be made against any reform legislation. If it were a valid and sufficient reason to defeat legislation, we would never pass another reform bill.

Furthermore, the bill for the first time requires litigants to present their claims to permit agencies before they sue in court and to file lawsuits no later than 180 days after the agency's final decisions. That will reduce litigation, not increase it.

We have also heard that the White House has threatened to veto the bill. Mr. Chairman, that is what is truly alarming. This legislation fulfills the calls of the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness to streamline the review of Federal permit applications. We are doing that in this legislation.

It creates shovel-ready projects, which even President Obama claims would create jobs. In fact, it would generate millions of high-paying, good jobs for our Nation's workers and families, who so desperately need them. It would raise the standard of living of Americans.

The White House should not be issuing threats to veto the legislation. The White House should be running to lend its support to this bill.

Ignore the false alarms and embrace the commonsense reforms in this bill. Pass the RAPID Act, call the President's bluff, give the Nation shovel-ready projects.

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

The Acting CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. GOODLATTE. 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. HARDY), having assumed the chair, Mr. LAMALFA, 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. 348) to provide for improved coordination of agency actions in the preparation and adoption of environmental documents for permitting determinations, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL RICE MONTH

(Mr. LAMALFA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, this month marks the 25th year of September being National Rice Month. Today I want to pay special tribute to the hard-working American farmers, millers, merchants, suppliers, and the consumers who make rice not only such a wholesome food, but an important part of our economy.

Rice farming in America actually predates our Nation's founding, beginning some 300 years ago in the Deep South. Today, America's rice industry creates 125,000 good-paying jobs and contributes an estimated \$34 billion to our Nation's economy.

America's rice farmers have also a longstanding commitment to protect and preserve natural resources. Today, U.S. rice farmers produce more rice, using less land, energy, and water, using cutting-edge technology in land-leveling, in yield, and in technology for using less chemicals.

The process is much more efficient than it was 20 years ago, while providing critical waterfowl habitat for hundreds of species. I know personally because I have leveled many of these fields myself.

America's rice farmers continue to serve as leaders in the farming community by producing a healthy, conservation-friendly rice crop that generates jobs and economic opportunity.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing September as National Rice Month.

□ 1600

CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: FEDERAL SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of Jan-

uary 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honor to serve here in the United States Congress, but we sully that honor when we waste the American people's time with misplaced priorities and manufactured crises.

Mr. Speaker, Congress has one fundamental responsibility: funding the Federal Government. But unfortunately, Republicans in Congress insist on undermining these responsibilities at virtually every turn.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans already insist on maintaining reckless sequester funding that chokes services for working and middle class Americans, seniors, veterans, and children. Instead of passing Republican budgets that meet the ever-changing needs of our Nation, Republicans choose to kick the can down the road through continuing resolutions that waste precious time and shortchange the American people.

But if sequestration and continuing resolutions weren't already bad enough, now we are facing a complete Federal shutdown because Republicans insist on holding Federal funds for women's health care hostage. Congress has just 4 legislative days remaining to pass a funding bill.

Mr. Speaker, the American people are fed up with this brinksmanship. It is time for us to run the country like adults.

Let's remember why this is happening: Republicans have pledged to shut down the entire Federal Government because of objections to abortion services by Planned Parenthood. Never mind that not a single cent of Federal money funds abortions by Planned Parenthood. Never mind that Planned Parenthood provides health care and education to more than 2.6 million Americans—both men and women—each year. Never mind that 97 percent of Planned Parenthood's health services are unrelated to abortions. Republicans would rather ignore these truths and instead rely on a series of distorted videos secretly filmed by discredited and shady antiabortion activists.

So instead of using this time to talk about creating jobs, building infrastructure, reducing college debt, and reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act, I am forced to stand here on the House floor to remind the American people about the dangers we face with yet another Republican shutdown.

Here are a few ways that this shutdown would harm the American people:

A shutdown would close more than 400 national parks and monuments. It would increase backlogs for veterans' pensions, compensation, and disability claims. It would delay tax refunds and Federal home loan applications; prohibit the National Institutes of Health from accepting new patients; shut down E-Verify screening for businesses to limit hiring undocumented workers; shutter Head Start programs for low-income families and children; and close Federal courts.

The impact of a 2015 shutdown is hard to quantify, but we don't have to look too far back to estimate the potential impact. In 2013, Republicans shut the government down for 16 days in a failed attempt to defund the Affordable Care Act. That shutdown furloughed 850,000 Federal workers for a total of 6.6 million days. The 2013 shutdown cost \$2 billion in lost productivity. Standard & Poor's estimated that the shutdown cost the U.S. economy \$24 billion and stalled the creation of more than 100,000 private sector jobs, and \$4.4 billion in tax returns were delayed. Small businesses and private lenders had to delay loans due to lack of access to Federal Social Security number and income verification tools.

Knowing what we know, Mr. Speaker, it is inconceivable that we could walk into this type of catastrophe by choice. That must be why the Speaker of the House, in 2013, called that shutdown a "very predictable disaster."

Mr. Speaker, I would much rather be predicting solutions than disasters. That is why I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Congressional Progressive Caucus to stave off this irresponsible and dangerous shutdown. Again, this is the one thing our constituents sent us to Washington for: to fund the government. This is our job.

I implore my anti-women's health colleagues to set aside their partisan bickering and work with us to keep this government open.

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

HISTORIC BROOKVILLE TOWN SQUARE

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, early this month, I visited Brookville, Jefferson County, located in my district, to congratulate local officials and community leaders on securing funds for a long-awaited project. The Historic Brookville Town Square is one of the most important pieces of the community's long-term plan and is the product of a very successful fundraising effort by Historic Brookville, Incorporated.

The Historic Brookville Town Square will be located next to the Jefferson County Courthouse on land once occupied by a vacant, rundown building.