

Helping more individuals access and complete higher education is a goal we all share. Research shows that students who earn a degree or credential are more likely to succeed in today's global economy.

For example, those with an Associate Degree are expected to earn 27 percent more than those with a high school diploma over the course of a lifetime, underscoring the value of higher education.

□ 1645

Unfortunately, less than 60 percent of students complete their studies within 6 years often because they can't afford to. Failure to pass the Higher Education Extension Act of 2015 will only make it more difficult for some students to access and complete their education.

Students across the country—including in my home State of Michigan—count on the Perkins Loan Program to help afford a college education. By supporting this responsible bipartisan legislation, we will deliver certainty to students and institutions as we continue to work on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3594.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, as we pass the Higher Education Extension Act of 2015, I would like to emphasize the importance of higher education in assisting our young people in building the knowledge and skills that will allow them to succeed in the workforce and, ultimately, help U.S. businesses and industry to compete in the global market.

Michigan is home to many outstanding colleges and universities and I often speak with families throughout the 14th District and the state about the financial burden created by the increasing cost of higher education. Like many Americans, I firmly believe that making higher education more affordable and accessible should be among our foremost priorities. During a recent trip to my District, I spoke with a student who held a full-time job while in school because her family could not afford her tuition. Although work can be extremely rewarding and helps to build a strong work-ethic, students who are forced to work long hours and attend school full-time often suffer diminished academic success.

Since 1986, the Federal Perkins Loan Program has been an essential part of college financial aid packages because it provides a long-term and low-interest alternative to expensive private loans for students. Extending the Perkins Loan Program will provide lower income students with the funding they need to attend college with their full focus on their education. Additionally, the cost of this extension is not borne by taxpayers. Rather, the Perkins Loan Program fully funds itself when past loan recipients pay-off the balance of their loan.

I am proud that our Chamber has taken this important step toward ensuring all young people have the opportunity to benefit from a world class education. I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for supporting the fight to make higher education affordable and accessible for all Americans.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this bill, which would extend the Perkins Loan program for one year, so that students who have demonstrated exceptional financial need can complete their undergraduate or graduate education in order to become academically qualified to join our workforce.

Historically, Perkins loans have served our students well by offering low-cost loans with flexible repayment terms and generous forgiveness options. They are often the difference between whether or not our students can afford to attend college, including 12,000 students in Texas.

For the academic year 2013–2014, nearly 500,000 students who needed financial assistance were awarded nearly \$1 billion in Perkins loans. And throughout its 57-year history, more than 30 million students with need have benefited from this program.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that the federal government will reclaim nearly \$5 billion in revenue from Perkins loans over the next ten years. That is \$5 billion that should be returned to students to help keep college affordable for the most financially challenged students. And that is \$5 billion that would have been lost if the program is not extended.

Without Perkins loans, schools would lose the necessary flexibility to help students cover their expenses after federal grants and Stafford loans are applied or unforeseen circumstances jeopardize a student's ability to pay for college.

If we want the United States of America to remain a global leader with the competitive edge necessary to sustain economic growth and job creation, we need the best, most highly trained workforce to sustain our advantages. The Perkins Loan program is a major part of helping our students develop, reach for and join that workforce.

For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to extend the federal Perkins Loan program.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3594.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

AMERICAN SAMOA MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE POSTPONEMENT

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2617) to amend the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 to postpone a scheduled increase in the minimum wage applicable to American Samoa, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2617

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. MINIMUM WAGE FOR AMERICAN SAMOA.

(a) MINIMUM WAGE.—Paragraph (2) of section 8103(b) of the Fair Minimum Wage Act

of 2007 (29 U.S.C. 206 note) is amended to read as follows:

“(2) the minimum wage applicable to American Samoa under section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) shall be—

“(A) the applicable wage rate in effect for each industry and classification as of September 29, 2015; and

“(B) increased by \$0.50 an hour (or such lesser amount as may be necessary to equal the minimum wage under section 6(a)(1) of such Act), beginning on December 31, 2016, and on December 31 of every third year thereafter, until the minimum wage applicable to American Samoa under this paragraph is equal to the minimum wage set forth in such section.”.

(b) GAO REPORTS.—Section 8104 of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 (29 U.S.C. 206 note) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking “September 1, 2011” and inserting “April 1, 2017”; and

(B) by striking the second sentence and inserting the following: “The Government Accountability Office shall submit a subsequent report not later than April 1, 2020.”;

(2) in subsection (b), by striking “the study under subsection (a)” and inserting “any report under subsection (a)”;

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) REPORT ON ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE IN AMERICAN SAMOA.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Government Accountability Office shall transmit to Congress a report on alternative ways of increasing the minimum wage in American Samoa to keep pace with the cost of living in American Samoa and to eventually equal the minimum wage set forth in section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)).”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) and the gentleman from the Northern Mariana Islands (Mr. SABLAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous materials on H.R. 2617.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 2617. This legislation is simple and straightforward. It would delay for 15 months a minimum wage increase that will take effect in American Samoa in just 2 days. If this increase takes effect, it will harm the very people it was intended to help, the hard-working men and women of American Samoa.

The reason we are here today is also quite simple. We are here because the local government in American Samoa is urging us to do this. We are here because the employers in American Samoa, who are few and far between, are urging us to do this. And, most importantly, we are here because the

workers in American Samoa are urging us to do this.

You don't have to take my word for it. Those are the facts that have been reported by the nonpartisan Government Accountability Office. For years, the territory has been plagued by a weak economy, fewer jobs, and higher inflation.

The tuna canning industry, an essential part of the American Samoa economy, has been hit especially hard. According to our own independent government watchdog, previous wage increases have forced employers to delay expansion, limit overtime, and cut labor costs, which means that they have ultimately had to lay off workers. Many fear these tough challenges will only get worse if we fail to act now.

It should be noted that this isn't the first time we have had to take this step. When our Democratic colleagues were in control a few years back, they passed legislation delaying the arbitrary wage increase they set in motion. That effort passed with strong bipartisan support, and I expect today's legislation will as well.

I also want to note that the legislation will help us end a dangerous pattern of uncertainty and last-minute delays. Under the bill, the Government Accountability Office is required to report on alternatives to setting the minimum wage in American Samoa.

No doubt there are a number of alternatives Congress could consider. For example, local leaders have proposed bestowing upon them the responsibility for setting wages in their local communities. While this is certainly an interesting idea, it is a debate for another day.

Today let's do the right thing by passing this important legislation.

In closing, I wish to thank my colleague from American Samoa, Delegate AMATA RADEWAGEN, for authoring this legislative proposal and for her tireless leadership on behalf of her constituents.

I urge all of my colleagues to stand with the people of American Samoa and support this legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, reducing the income inequality between the people I represent in the Northern Mariana Islands and Americans in the rest of our Nation is one of my key goals as a Member of Congress.

Household median income in the Marianas was just \$20,000 in the last census compared to \$53,000 nationwide. For that reason, I have always supported the decision made in the 110th Congress to raise the minimum wage in the Marianas to the U.S. level in a series of graduated steps.

When that decision was enacted in Public Law 110-28, the locally set minimum wage in the Mariana Islands was just \$3.05 per hour and the minimum wage had been stuck at that level since the 1990s. Today the minimum wage

has effectively doubled to \$6.05 and will increase to \$6.55 a year from now.

That doubling of the minimum wage has occurred during a period of economic difficulty for the Mariana Islands. Gross domestic product was dropping by 8 percent, 12 percent, 19 percent in the first 3 years of minimum wage increase.

I should say, however, that these drops had nothing to do with the wage and everything to do with the loss of manufacturing because of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade and because of a loss of tourism.

In the most recent year for which GDP data is available for our islands, we had economic growth of 4.4 percent, even as the minimum wage continued to rise.

The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis says that this economic growth reflects a growth in tourism, especially an increase in tourism from China. But it also reflects a growth in consumption because workers who are paid more can spend more, and that is good for the economy.

So I look forward to next year's increase of another 50 cents in the minimum wage in the Mariana Islands. I look forward to reaching the national minimum wage in 2019, and I support legislation raising the national minimum wage because I have now seen in my district that increasing wages can have a positive impact on economic activity and improve people's lives.

At the same time, I recognize that there is such a thing as economic reality. Raising the minimum wage too quickly could have a detrimental effect, could cause employment to shrink. For that reason, over the last 7 years that I have been in Congress, I worked with Members on both sides of the aisle to tailor the minimum wage increases to the specific economic realities in my district.

Instead of raising it by 50 cents every year, as the original law required, we skipped the increases in 2011, 2013, and this year, 2015. We arrived at the decision to stretch out the time of the increases by listening to employers on the island and to workers because workers also understand that increasing wages too quickly could jeopardize their jobs. We also listened carefully to the Government Accountability Office experts who look at the effect of these minimum wage increases periodically and report back to Congress.

I think that, so far, at least, we have successfully walked the fine line. We have kept the minimum wage increasing—faster than prices, GAO tells us—without disrupting the economy.

I am very grateful to both Democrats here in Congress, who agreed to slow down the increases, and to Republicans, who agreed to let the minimum wage keep going up. They did so, I think, because of a recognition that a relatively isolated island economy might need special consideration and because, when it comes to a decision that only affects a Member's own dis-

trict, there is a tradition of deference here in Congress to the views of that Member.

This is a very long way around to saying that I support H.R. 2617, the bill now under consideration.

The gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN) has made the determination that what is best for her constituents is to delay further increases in the minimum wage. She too represents a relatively isolated island economy. Her constituents too have incomes much below the U.S. average. The specific economic factors in American Samoa are not the same as in the Northern Mariana Islands.

So while a delay for American Samoa may be appropriate, I would not want to imply a further delay for the Northern Marianas is called for at this time. But I do think that the same courtesy that the House has provided to me, when it comes to making a judgment about the well-being of the people I represent, should be given to the Delegate from American Samoa with respect to her own district.

For that reason, I urge Members to support passage of H.R. 2617.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 minutes to the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN).

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege for me to serve the people of American Samoa in the U.S. House of Representatives. My home district of American Samoa, an isolated group of islands, is 6 hours by plane south of Hawaii.

Sometimes we jokingly refer to our three main exports as canned tuna, military personnel, and NFL players.

Today I would like to talk about the canned tuna, though. Due to an oversight, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, which became law in 2007, contained language that stipulated that American Samoa must raise its minimum wage by 50 cents every 3 years starting in 2009 until it meets the Federal standard.

Since that time, Congress has graciously granted two waivers to American Samoa which prevents them from having to institute the increase, and wisely so. Had Congress not granted the waivers, the effects would have been absolutely devastating to our local economy, of which the tuna canneries comprise 80 percent.

When the Fair Minimum Wage Act was passed in 2007, American Samoa had two canneries on the island. As a direct result of the law and concern with future wage increases, in 2009, the day after a deadly tsunami struck our island, the cannery operated by Chicken of the Sea relocated to Thailand, causing thousands to instantly lose their jobs and hundreds shortly followed.

In Thailand, Chicken of the Sea now pays their workers a mere \$1.25 an hour and are rumored to be cutting wages further in 2016, while the workers in

American Samoa are paid \$4.76 an hour. While \$4.76 may not seem like a large amount here in the States, one must realize that, in American Samoa, the cost of living is drastically different.

Due to how the lands are owned and managed in American Samoa, there is actually no such thing as rent or a mortgage, items that often comprise up to one-half of a person's monthly expenses. Because our people do not have an expense for housing, \$4.76 an hour goes much further than it would here in the States.

While well-intended, the Fair Minimum Wage Act has placed the economic well-being of American Samoa in great jeopardy. No one would like to see the people of American Samoa prosper and have their wages increased more than I.

However, this is neither the time nor mechanism for such a drastic increase, as it would surely be the proverbial nail in the coffin for the local economy, as the two canneries that are currently operating out of American Samoa have stated the strong possibility of having to leave our island because they simply would not be able to compete financially against their foreign competitors. One of these canneries just opened this year and is trying to establish a toehold in the region. Without the extension, this will be very difficult for them.

Currently, due to many factors, the long-term continuity of the Pago Pago-based canneries is now threatened by reduced tuna deliveries and supply, which will negatively affect cannery production, impact cannery employment and support services, and could possibly destroy American Samoa's economy altogether.

□ 1700

Past decisions by the United States Government have led to the current dire situation.

In 2005, the U.S. Government agreed to reduce fishing opportunities by U.S. purse seine vessels on the high seas and within the U.S. EEZ. At the same time, the U.S. purse seine fleet contracted from 49 vessels in 1994 to 11 in 2007.

This major shift in the management of the purse seine fishery should have been recognized by the United States Government as significant in terms of fleet operations and the impact it would have on American Samoa. Unfortunately, it seems that the territory was not considered.

That same year, the U.S. allowed Taiwanese-built vessels to become U.S. flagged, thereby receiving the same benefits afforded under the South Pacific Tuna Treaty. These new vessels fish farther away from American Samoa and predominantly offload their catch in Thailand.

In 2013, the U.S. Government agreed to pay a combined amount, from both government and industry, of approximately \$90 million, while agreeing to further reduce the United States fishing effort on the high seas.

After that, in 2014, the United States agreed to an inexcusable deal, to the detriment of American Samoa, reducing the amount of fishing days available in Kiribati waters to the United States fleet from 4,313 to just 300 days in just 1 year. Kiribati waters are typically the most productive purse seine fishing grounds in close proximity to Pago Pago. However, the American Samoa-based purse seine vessels are now forced to travel great distances, making Pago Pago canneries less desirable and increasing transshipping to foreign ports.

In addition, the expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument and the high seas effort limit have further reduce the fishing grounds available to the American Samoa-based purse seine fleet, lending to the dire situation facing American Samoa's local canneries. These are waters that have been fished by our people for many centuries.

Like other small island developing states and territories in the Pacific, American Samoa and the fishing industry it supports should be afforded special recognition, not crushed by the worst aspects of capitalism—and I say this as a devout capitalist.

Until we begin to safeguard our fishery interests in the region, American Samoa's tuna fisheries will continue to wither, creating economic ruin in American Samoa, the other Pacific territories, and even Hawaii, leaving the United States as a passive observer in the world's largest tuna fishery, leaving other nations such as China to run roughshod over fisheries to the detriment of not only the people, but the environment as well.

We must reverse some of the missteps the United States has taken over the years which have left the American Samoa economy in this highly vulnerable position. The closing off of large swaths of ocean, under the guise of national monuments, which cover thousands of square miles of traditional fishing grounds that our people have used for centuries, to the reduction in allotted fishing days that have gone from over 4,000 to under 500 in just 1 year, this is certainly not the time to put further pressure on an industry that is seemingly under attack from all sides, a local industry that operates at a loss in comparison to its competitors when it comes to labor, due to their longstanding relationship with the people of American Samoa, for which we are very grateful.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard some concern about Congress continuing to kick the can down the road on this issue. To those, I extend willing and eager hands for cooperation and assistance in fixing the mechanism by which the wages are set in American Samoa. The playing fields between the United States and American Samoa are too drastically different to place on the same wage scale, and to keep American Samoa tied to the current standard is dangerous and irresponsible. It is my plan

to use the time granted in the extension to work on a new mechanism for setting the minimum wage rate in American Samoa, and I happily encourage fellow Members to join me in this mission.

If there is ever any bill that I introduce that I wish I could vote against, this would be it. However, while it is difficult, I also know that it must be done. Oftentimes, the things that are the most difficult are also the most important, and currently, there is no issue more important to the economic well-being of American Samoa than this.

I respectfully and wholeheartedly ask my colleagues in both the House and Senate to support this legislation that is so absolutely critical to the economic stability of American Samoa.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentlewoman an additional 3 minutes.

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Without it, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid we will be back here in just a few months trying to figure out a way to subsidize what is already the most economically challenged territory or State in our Nation.

The tuna canning industry is all we have. There is no Coca-Cola or IBM. We have no Silicon Valley there to provide massive revenue and employment opportunity to the territory. There aren't numerous military and government facilities that provide sources of economic growth. We are not surrounded by fellow States that enable us to expand to other markets. All we have is the tuna industry, and we are grateful for them.

So again, I graciously ask my fellow colleagues to support this unfortunate, yet essential, piece of legislation. If you cannot support it, all I ask is that you do not block it, because it would be absolutely devastating to our people.

I want to thank Chairman KLINE, Ranking Member SCOTT, and the committee staff for their assistance in getting this measure to the floor, as well as the numerous other staff and Members who put in many hours of hard work to get us here today.

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I do urge my colleagues to please support H.R. 2617.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, as I noted earlier, this effort is supported by local leaders in American Samoa. It is supported by employers in American Samoa, and, most importantly, it is supported by the working men and women of American Samoa.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BISHOP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2617, 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.

CROSS-BORDER RAIL SECURITY ACT OF 2015

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2786) to require the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection to submit a report on cross-border rail security, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2786

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 “Cross-Border Rail Security Act of 2015”.

SEC. 2. CROSS-BORDER RAIL SECURITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report on the following:

(1) The number of shipments entering the United States by rail annually that are determined to be high-risk by the Commissioner.

(2) Specific details on the status of radiation detection units, by type, at each rail crossing on the northern and southern land borders as of such date of enactment.

(3) An assessment of whether additional radiation detection equipment is necessary to ensure that all such high-risk cross-border rail shipments are examined with appropriate equipment.

(4) A plan for ensuring that all relevant CBP personnel receive adequate training and guidance on the proper use of CBP’s Automated Targeting System for such high-risk cross-border rail shipments, the use of appropriate radiation detection equipment for examination of such high-risk cross-border rail shipments, and requirements for recording examination results.

(b) GAO AUDIT.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall periodically audit U.S. Customs and Border Protection operations at rail crossings on the northern and southern international borders to ensure rail shipments are targeted, examined, and the results of such examinations properly documented.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Arizona.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2786, the Cross-Border Rail Security Act of 2015.

First, I would like to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VELA), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security, for introducing this thoughtful bill and working in a collaborative manner as this legislation moved through the committee process.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation requires the Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection to submit a report to Congress that outlines how and when high-risk rail shipments entering the United States are scanned for potential risks.

The impetus for this legislation was a recent inspector general report that found CBP was inadequately targeting high-risk rail shipments arriving in the U.S. from Canada and Mexico. This bill will help Congress better understand the frequency and location of such high-risk shipments and detail the current state of radiation detection equipment on our international railways.

Mr. Speaker, as many of my colleagues who also live along the border know, each year approximately 2.7 million containers enter the United States by rail. While most of the commodities transferred by rail do not pose significant homeland security threats, we must ensure that we are properly identifying and targeting those shipments which are high risk and conduct physical scanning when necessary.

To ensure proper oversight, it is very important to understand the capabilities of CBP, including the number, location, and type of detection equipment used at each cross-border rail crossing. We also need to understand what additional equipment and training is necessary to ensure our rail cargo system is secure.

As we know, proper training is an important force multiplier which will help maximize effectiveness of our Customs and Border Protection Officers, reducing wait times and increasing security.

Finally, H.R. 2786 requires the Government Accountability Office to perform a series of audits over CBP’s targeting of cross-border rail shipments.

Mr. Speaker, rail cargo is expected to increase over the next 10 years. This bill will ensure CBP adequately addresses this vulnerability and implements proper standards of screening and targeting for rail cargo. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2786.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2786, the Cross-Border Rail Security Act.

Mr. Speaker, in March of this year, the Department of Homeland Security’s inspector general released a report on high-risk cross-border rail cargo. The report concluded that U.S. Customs and Border Protection, or CBP, did not always use the required radiation detection equipment to examine shipments it determined to be high risk. Additionally, some ports of entry lacked the appropriate equipment to conduct these screenings, and training and oversight of targeting and examining such shipments was lacking.

In response to these troubling findings, my bill would require the CBP Commissioner to submit to the relevant congressional committees within 180 days of enactment a report regarding high-risk cross-border rail cargo shipments entering the United States.

Mr. Speaker, my bill would require the report to include information on the number of high-risk shipments crossing the border by rail, details on the radiation detection units at rail crossings, an assessment of whether additional equipment is necessary, and a plan for ensuring that all relevant CBP personnel receive appropriate training to appropriately target, examine, and record the disposition of such shipments. The bill requires the Government Accountability Office to audit periodically CBP operations at rail crossings to ensure rail shipments are being appropriately targeted, examined, and documented.

The community I represent has a vested interest in securing cross-border rail cargo. This past August, I was proud to be a part of the opening of the West Rail Bypass International Bridge located in Brownsville, Texas, the first international new rail crossing between the U.S. and Mexico in over a century.

Both of our land borders are dotted with these crossings, and, in fact, the majority of them are located on the northern border. The cargo that crosses by rail is destined for locations all over the United States, making the effective targeting and examining of high-risk shipments a national concern.

Mr. Speaker, my committee colleagues unanimously supported this bill, and I urge all of my colleagues to help strengthen the cross-border rail security by supporting H.R. 2786.

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

□ 1715

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

Mr. Speaker, I once again urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2786.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee, I rise in support of H.R. 2786, the “Cross-Border Rail Security Act of 2015,” which directs U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to report to Congress on its inspection of high-risk shipments entering the United States by rail.