

they do not have clarity on who would be responsible if they were injured or even killed while performing their jobs.

It is amazing that we ask these men and women to go into collapsed structures to search for trapped survivors, risking life and limb, without providing them with clarity when it comes to liability and injuries.

The stories of the selfless heroism of these men and women are numerous and humbling. Their work is tireless, physically and emotionally demanding, and nerve-racking.

In Hurricane Matthew, one team helped make more than 100 rescues in North Carolina alone, including the rescue of a 98-year-old hospice patient, when they had to go into areas where the water was 5 to 7 feet above street level, and they could only see the tops of the street signs.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, a single task force rescued more than 850 individuals in 17 hours from a flooded area overwhelmed by a tidal surge. And there are hundreds more such as these accounts.

These heroes play an essential role in the Federal response to national disasters and catastrophes. In addition, the National USAR system benefits our State, local, and regional emergency managers and first responders through training, equipment, and preparedness.

The local government and other entities that sponsor the members of the teams should not have to worry about being left vulnerable or exposed by allowing their employees to participate in such a critical national asset.

After 8 years, it is time to give men and women who put their lives at risk the liability protections they and their families need and deserve. I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

First, I would like to compliment the Senate on passing the bill we passed last week, the 21st Century Cures Act, which will help research and save the lives of many Americans, something we did in a bipartisan fashion. I am pleased that that happened.

I rise in support of S. 2971, the National Urban Search and Rescue Response System Act of 2016, as amended, which codifies the Urban Search and Rescue Response System.

Authorizing the urban search and rescue teams, better known as USAR teams, and codifying protections for team members, such as workers' comp and liability protections, have been a top priority of mine since I first introduced a bill to do so in 2007, my first year in Congress.

I was pleased that the late former Democratic Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman, an outstanding Member, Mr. Oberstar, now deceased, included my USAR language in a bill that was reported from the committee in 2010. Since then, legislation authorizing USAR teams has passed the House several times, and now the Senate has passed one as well.

□ 1515

The 28 urban search and rescue teams that are strategically located across the United States provide timely response when needed in the aftermath of a disaster. In fact, USAR teams can be ready for deployment within 6 hours of being called up.

These specialized teams of first responders provide search and rescue services, extraction from structural collapses, and swift, rapid rescue, among other activities, after disaster strikes. Their dedication is truly commendable, as they drop everything in their busy daily lives to come to the prompt assistance of others when needed.

It should be noted that USAR teams even respond internationally when assistance is requested. In fact, two USAR teams deployed in the aftermath of Nepal's earthquakes in 2015 and were responsible for many rescues from structural collapses.

It is only appropriate that we ensure that they have the protection they need to perform their jobs as well as the peace of mind that will come from clarity in compensation and liability issues.

USAR teams may be composed of firefighters, law enforcement officers, paramedics, engineers, medical professionals, and canine handlers. Often, these team members are civil servants. By extending job protection benefits when activated for Federal service, team members know that their jobs will be waiting at home for them. In addition, it helps USAR teams recruit and retain new members.

Tennessee's USAR, known as Tennessee Task Force One, has a strong commitment to their jobs, and they do an extraordinarily good job. Tennessee Task Force One is based in Memphis, Tennessee, and consists of firefighters, police officers, and civilians; and they responded when called to assist in the aftermath of disasters, such as Hurricane Matthew in South Carolina and, most recently, for the tragic wildfires in our Smoky Mountains. They did so despite the uncertainty of whether they would be covered for any injuries.

Their actions are truly heroic, and I applaud them and their dedication. The protections in today's bill are long overdue, and team members can now rest assured that they will be taken care of if they are injured when performing Federal duties.

I am sadly disappointed, though, that the Republican leadership is once again selectively choosing when and when not to enforce its budget rules. The underlying Senate bill we are considering authorized "such sums as necessary" to carry out the USAR system. Despite the House having passed a bill authorizing "such sums as necessary" for the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System earlier this year, we are now told that this authorization violates budget rules and an amendment and further consideration by the Senate is required.

As a result, USAR team members must wait another day before we afford them the protections that they deserve. They deserve better, and they deserve laws that will ensure that Congress will appropriate adequate funds to support them and their activities.

I thank all the USAR teams for their service, and I thank Mr. BARLETTA for working on this bill as well. I urge my colleagues to support our USAR teams by supporting the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. BARLETTA. Mr. Speaker, I again urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on S. 2971.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BARLETTA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 2971, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate concurs in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the bill (H.R. 34) "An Act to authorize and strengthen the tsunami detection, forecast, warning, research, and mitigation program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for other purposes."

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2016

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5790) to provide adequate protections for whistleblowers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5790

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 "Federal Bureau of Investigation Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES IN THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION.

Section 2303(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "any employee of the Bureau" and all that follows through "health or safety" and inserting the following: "an employee in, or applicant for, a position in the Bureau as a reprisal for a disclosure of information—

“(1) made—

“(A) in the case of an employee, to a supervisor in the direct chain of command of the employee, up to and including the head of the employing agency;

“(B) to the Inspector General;

“(C) to the Office of Professional Responsibility of the Department of Justice;

“(D) to the Office of Professional Responsibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;

“(E) to the Inspection Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation;

“(F) as described in section 7211;

“(G) to the Office of Special Counsel; or

“(H) to an employee designated by any officer, employee, office, or division described in subparagraphs (A) through (G) for the purpose of receiving such disclosures; and

“(2) which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences—

“(A) any violation of any law, rule, or regulation; or

“(B) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ) and the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5790, the FBI Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2016, as amended.

We have great respect and admiration for the FBI. They do wonderful work. In fact, I was always proud of my grandfather. He was a career FBI agent serving here in the Greater Washington, D.C., area and then up in Pennsylvania for a long period of time. It is because I respect the FBI and its agents that I helped introduce this bill.

The whistleblower protections in the FBI have really not kept up with the rest of government. That is why we need a change here. The whistleblowers at the FBI should be treated the same as they are within the rest of the Federal Government, and this simple bill goes to help correct that.

H.R. 5790 would clarify Congress' longstanding intent to protect whistleblowers when they make disclosures to the same supervisors who have the power to take personnel actions against them. While a great many changes remain to be made in how the Department of Justice and the FBI respond to whistleblowers, this clarification is not a minor one. If implemented, it would have far-reaching implications in protecting whistleblowers at the FBI just as Congress intended in

1978 in the Whistleblower Protection Act.

The FBI Director, Mr. Comey, testified a year ago in the Senate that he “very much” supports legal protections for FBI employees who follow FBI's own policies and report wrongdoing to their supervisors. Similarly, the Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, testified: “We certainly support protecting those who report within their chain of command.”

I want to thank, in particular, the Senate Judiciary Committee, and specifically Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY for his leadership in first introducing this version of the bill. We are also grateful for the support of my colleagues, including Representative HAKEEM JEFFRIES, who joined me as the lead Democrat on this bill in this House.

I also want to particularly thank ELIJAH CUMMINGS, the ranking member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, a great friend and colleague and somebody who also has been very supportive of the passage of this bill. I thank him for his work and commitment on this issue.

Mr. CUMMINGS, personally and through his dedicated staff, continually has worked hand in hand on whistleblower protections, and this is no exception. Together, we have sent the message throughout the Federal Government that protecting whistleblowers is not a partisan issue, and passing this bill will not mark the end of the road for reforming whistleblower protections at the FBI. In fact, in the next Congress, I look forward to addressing other issues raised by the whistleblower community in the GAO as well as the Department of Justice.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5790, as amended. This bill will provide FBI employees with protection for blowing the whistle to a supervisor and make it a prohibited personnel practice to retaliate against a whistleblower for making such a disclosure.

This bill will also ensure that FBI employees are protected when they blow the whistle to certain other individuals, including the Inspector General of the Department of Justice and the Office of Special Counsel.

These small improvements to protect FBI whistleblowers are why I support this measure before us.

The version of this bill that was reported by the Oversight and Government Reform Committee would have done much more to protect the whistleblowers at the FBI than the measure before us today. The introduced version of this bill would have strengthened the whistleblower protections for FBI employees by more closely aligning them with those of the rest of the Federal workforce.

For example, it would have strengthened the appeals process for whistleblowers by requiring appellate review by the Attorney General and giving employees access to the courts. It would have defined prohibited personnel practices to be consistent with those of other Federal employees, and it would have prohibited the use of nondisclosure agreements unless the employee was fully aware of his or her rights before signing such an agreement.

We should work to enact these additional improvements in the next Congress. All employees deserve strong whistleblower protections, including the employees of the FBI.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to my ranking member, Mr. CUMMINGS, and to our chair of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, thank you for the hearings and the dedicated work to ensure that our FBI agents are protected in any case of whistleblowing.

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

Mr. CHAFFETZ. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank, again, Mrs. LAWRENCE. I want to thank the ranking member, Mr. CUMMINGS.

This is a good, bipartisan issue. It is really a nonpartisan issue. It is to protect Federal employees within the FBI so that they can have the whistleblower protections that, really, most of the rest of the government has, and I urge its adoption.

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

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, H.R. 5790, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

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

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

TRANSPARENT INSURANCE STANDARDS ACT OF 2016

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 944, I call up the bill (H.R. 5143) to provide greater transparency and congressional oversight of international insurance standards setting processes, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 944, in lieu of the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services, printed in the bill, an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the