

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.

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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—