

While Experimac itself operates under the United Franchise Group umbrella and has more than 170 locations across the country, the broader company's success speaks to the need for local technology experts in today's competitive secondhand tech market. I am grateful for the resources the Manassas location will provide everyday customers, schools, and businesses.

In today's competitive economy, businesses like Experimac not only assist people with the services they offer, but they also foster strong local and secondhand economies. Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in applauding the Grand Opening of Experimac. I am very thankful for the broad range of opportunities it will afford my constituents of Virginia's 10th District, and I look forward to the positive impact it will have on individuals, schools, businesses, and our commonwealth as a whole.

H.R. 244, THE FY2017 CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT

HON. GARRET GRAVES

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I did not ultimately support this legislation, however, there is much contained within the bill's almost 1700 pages of statutory text in addition to the explanatory statement that will advance the safety, security and economy of our great nation.

The bill includes \$551.1 billion in base defense discretionary funding and \$76.99 billion in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO)/Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) defense funding. The total FY2017 defense funding is \$598.5 billion, \$25.7 billion over FY16 levels, and includes \$21 billion in new funding requested by the Administration. These funds provide for our national defense, pay our troops, and provide the resources and equipment our military needs to restore readiness, and protect our national security. I support these amounts to ensure American troops have what they need as we continue to engage threats to our national and homeland security around the world. Mr. Speaker, this bill also takes the first of many steps toward additional border security improvements by providing \$1.5 billion for critical funding for infrastructure, innovative technology, and agents at the border.

Other key provisions that I support include putting appropriate parameters in place for the Environmental Protection Agency; and providing \$50 million in additional current-year funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve opioid and substance abuse prevention and treatment for veterans.

Mr. Speaker, the bill also and importantly provides \$57.7 billion for our nation's infrastructure, provides funding consistent with authorized levels in the FAST Act, which I was involved in crafting, and \$948 million in additional disaster relief for the Emergency Relief Program and Community Development Block Grant disaster recovery assistance. Importantly, the bill includes \$15 million that I requested for the state and local law enforcement agencies through the Bureau of Justice Assistance. These agencies experienced so

many challenges over the last several months. These challenges include a police-involved shooting on July 5, 2016 and subsequent violent protests, the ambush and murder of Baton Rouge City Police and East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff Deputies on July 17, 2016 and a 1000-year flood event in mid-August of the same year. Five of our officers were shot in the ambush and the flood resulted in the loss of an estimated 100 police vehicles, critical law enforcement equipment, weapons and personal and family losses for many of our peacekeepers.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately I could not vote for this bill despite the numerous provisions I support because appropriating over a trillion dollars in thousands of pages of new text over a few days does not afford the degree of transparency and consideration that I believe we should have. Further, the bill represents a lost opportunity to deliver on the commitment towards the recovery needs of tens of thousands of flood victims in my district and state of Louisiana. As I mentioned, there are provisions that can help, like providing some assistance through Community Development Block Grants—of which Louisiana victims will receive a small. Yet this funding varies wildly from the assessed needs of both HUD and the state. This is wholly inadequate given the scale of the flood event that struck Louisiana last August. That is why I offered four amendments to the bill that would have increased the total amount of Community Development Block Grants available to disaster impacted areas by \$750 million, made \$100 million available for Army Corps projects like the Comite River Diversion Canal to reduce the risk of future flood events, and provide much needed relief for our local school districts as they seek to rebuild and reopen 8 months after the flood. These amendments were not ultimately adopted, but I will continue to fight and advocate for these priorities and more as we work on a FY2018 funding bill.

Mr. Speaker, I feel strongly about the federal government's need to balance the budget, eliminate deficits and pay on the national debt. There is this misconception that under-funding CDBG—DR recovery assistance saves money. The reality is that we requested a fraction of the per capita assistance afforded to the victims of Hurricane Sandy and this calculation excludes the tens of billions of recovery funding provided in other federal programs. We have no desire to be greedy, but Americans need to know that when a catastrophic event occurs their government will be there—that we have their back. We have already seen many leave our community, bankruptcies, homes foreclosed, flood victims selling their homes for a fraction of the pre-flood value and many still living in tents, travel trailers, gutted homes and other inappropriate conditions. Rather than tailoring an appropriate response for this extraordinary flood, our own government's bureaucracy at the state and federal level are contributing to the pain rather than easing it. We can and should do better.

CONGRATULATING TAIWAN PRESIDENT TSAI ING-WEN AND HEADWAY IN THE ARENA OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, since President Tsai Ing-wen assumed office last May, Taiwan has taken steps to bolster women's empowerment at home and abroad. In November 2016, Taiwan and the U.S. announced their intention to jointly support the establishment of a subfund on women and the economy under the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

This joint initiative will allow the 21 members of APEC to apply for funding for new or existing programs with the aim of improving women's economic empowerment. The subfund, created through a mutually trusting relationship between Washington and Taipei, highlights Taiwan's meaningful participation in the international community. In particular, the subfund will promote women's empowerment in the areas of capital and market access, skills and capacity building, women's leadership and agency, and innovation and technology. Women's empowerment is a key area of collaboration under the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF) established by the U.S. and Taiwan that President Tsai's administration has been focusing on.

Taiwan continues to make significant headway in the arena of women's empowerment. I congratulate President Tsai on her first anniversary as the President of Taiwan, and I look forward to an even closer U.S.-Taiwan cooperation under her leadership in the years to come.

HONORING SCOUTMASTER JIM RICARD

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on May 15, 2017, a Celebration of the Resurrected Life of Jim Ricard took place at Faith Lutheran Church of West Columbia, South Carolina. Services were lovingly conducted by Pastor M. David Kiel who eulogized that Jim "made a difference in our part of the world." The Wilson family especially appreciates Jim's service as Scoutmaster of Troop 1, where our four sons achieved the rank of Eagle Scouts.

The following thoughtful obituary was included in the church bulletin:

Haskel James "Jim" Ricard Jr., a baptized Christian and lifelong member of Faith Lutheran Church, entered into God's loving embrace on May 12, 2017. He was born January 4, 1942 in Springdale, South Carolina. He was the oldest son of Hack and Melva Ricard.

Jim is survived by his wife of 52 years, JoAnn S. Ricard, and three children, Jamey Ricard (Jeanne), Juston Ricard (Tammy), and Joni Coleman (Brad). His grandchildren are Tanner, Jacob, Sydney, Josie, Jayne, and sister-in-law, Cindy. He was predeceased by his brother, Bobby Ricard.