and storage of controlled substances away from the site that is registered with the DEA. This makes it illegal for athletic team doctors to transport a small amount of critical medications that may be needed to treat athletes while on the road.

Athletics are awfully important in Texas, and I think it is by luck of the draw—specifically, football—that you have three Texans today who want to make sure that our teams can have their doctors treat them. For equal time for my colleague from Dallas, I am sure this law would also provide for the Houston Texans, not just for the Dallas Cowboys.

It also complicates care for patients in emergency disaster areas where a doctor may want to offer their services during a crisis.

This bill would allow a physician to transport controlled substances to another practice setting or to a Presidentially declared disaster area if the physician is registered to dispense controlled substances listed on schedules II, III, IV, or V, and they enter into a specific agreement with the DEA.

The agreement would require a physician to provide advance notification to the DEA of any transport, identify the controlled substances to be transported and the locations to and from, the intended dates of transport, and the anticipated travel time. The physician is also required to maintain records in their primary practice setting on the dispensing of transported substances, and the duration of the agreement is limited to 72 hours.

As the Nation grapples with the ongoing prescription drug abuse crisis, these safeguards are important to ensuring appropriate use, while allowing doctors to treat patients where they are.

I want to thank the sponsor, Representative PETE SESSIONS, and the committee for their work to advance this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1492, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

I want to commend Chairman SESSIONS for working on this important legislation with the Energy and Commerce Committee, the House Judiciary Committee, and the Drug Enforcement Administration to ensure that we got it right. This is a good bill with appropriate safeguards.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes,'' and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1492, the ''Medical Controlled Substances Transportation Act of 2017.''

This bill amends the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) to direct the Attorney General to register practitioners to transport controlled substances to States in which the practitioner is not registered under the CSA to administer these substances at locations other than principal places of professional practice.

H.R. 1492 provides necessary guidance to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to clarify the requirements of physicians whose jobs inherently require transporting controlled substances.

By requiring the registration of practitioners who transport and administer controlled substances across state lines, this bill also increases oversight to ensure physicians are appropriately administering controlled substances to their patients.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1492 addresses a crucial element in America's current opioid crisis regarding the mishandling of powerful prescription drugs by licensed physicians which can result in problems with addiction or abuse for patients.

This issue is particularly relevant in the arena of sports medicine, where specialized physicians are often required to swiftly treat athlete injuries while on the road.

In high-pressure environments, physicians and trainers sometimes prioritize athletic performance over physical and mental health, a mentality which has been shown to leave the door open for long-term, potentially devastating consequences for the players.

Earlier this year, a group of more than 1,800 former professional football players filed a federal lawsuit against all 32 teams of the National Football League (NFL) for allowing teams to violate federal laws governing the transportation, distribution, and administration of prescription drugs.

The lawsuit revealed a slew of dangerous, illegal practices within the NFL and individual teams, including the excessive administration and use of powerful painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs as well as the failure of league and team officials to acknowledge or comply with guidance from the DEA.

In 2012, for instance, the average NFL team prescribed nearly 5,777 doses of anti-inflammatory drugs and 2,213 doses of controlled medications to its players.

The staggering levels of opioid use in the NFL have led to a number of chronic health problems for many former players who continue to suffer from long-term organ and joint damage years or even decades after they have retired.

Even more troubling, a 2011 survey of 644 retired players found that 7 percent were still actively using opioid drugs in retirement—more than four limes the rate of opioid use in the general population.

National sports leagues like the NFL are massive, multi-billion dollar industries that drive many local economies in the United States; last year, the average NFL team was worth $2.3 billion and employed 3,739 people.

However, it is vital that we recognize the human cost of this highly profitable business.

With the immense economic and cultural value of America's sports teams and athletes in mind, the federal government should take all necessary measures to ensure that fans and players are able to enjoy their favorite past-times safely and fairly.

H.R. 1492 is a crucial step in improving the DEA's ability to protect prescription drug recipients who are vulnerable to misusing or abusing painkillers and other powerful medications.

Fixing our national opioid epidemic is a bipartisan cause, and I am confident that this legislation has the potential to effect powerful and positive change for large numbers of Americans.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 1492.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1492.

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. BURGESS. 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.

FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ANTIDISCRIMINATION ACT OF 2017

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 702) to amend the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 to strengthen Federal antidiscrimination laws enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and expand accountability within the Federal Government, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 702

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 Employee Antidiscrimination Act of 2017''.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

Section 102 of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (4), to read as follows:

''(4) accountability in the enforcement of Federal employee rights is furthered when Federal agencies take appropriate disciplinary action against Federal employees who have been found to have committed discriminatory or retaliatory acts;''; and

(2) in paragraph (5)(A)—

(A) by striking ''nor is accountability'' and inserting ''but accountability is not''; and

(B) by inserting ''for what by law the agency is responsible'' after ''under this Act''.

SEC. 3. NOTIFICATION OF VIOLATION.

Section 202 of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(d) NOTIFICATION OF FINAL AGENCY ACTION.—

''(1) Not later than 30 days after a Federal agency takes final action or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issues an appellate decision involving a finding of discrimination or retaliation prohibited by a provision of law covered by paragraph (1) or (2) of section 201(a), as applicable, the head of the agency subject to the finding shall provide notice for at least 1 year on the agency's Internet Web site in a clear and prominent location linked directly from the agency's Internet home page stating that a finding of discrimination or retaliation has been made.

''(2) The notification shall identify the date the finding was made, the date or dates

on which the discriminatory or retaliatory act or acts occurred, and the law or laws violated by the discriminatory or retaliatory act or acts. The notification shall also advise Federal employees of the rights and protections available under the respective provisions of law covered by paragraph (1) or (2) of section 201(a).''.

SEC. 4. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.

(a) ELECTRONIC FORMAT REQUIREMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 203(a) of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended—

(A) by inserting ''Homeland Security and'' before ''Governmental Affairs'';

(B) by inserting ''Oversight and'' before ''Government Reform''; and

(C) by inserting ''(in an electronic format prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management)'' after ''an annual report''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1)(C) shall take effect on the date that is 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act.

(3) TRANSITION PERIOD.—Notwithstanding the requirements of section 203(a) of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note), the report required under such section may be submitted in an electronic format, as prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management, during the period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act and ending on the effective date in paragraph (2).

(b) REPORTING REQUIREMENT FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION.—Section 203 of such Act is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(c) DISCIPLINARY ACTION REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the date on which a Federal agency takes final action or a Federal agency receives an appellate decision issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission involving a finding of discrimination or retaliation in violation of a provision of law covered by paragraph (1) or (2) of section 201(a), as applicable, the employing Federal agency shall submit to the Commission a report stating whether disciplinary action has been initiated against a Federal employee as a result of the violation.''.

SEC. 5. DATA TO BE POSTED BY EMPLOYING FEDERAL AGENCIES.

Section 301(b) of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (9)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) in subparagraph (B)(ii), by striking the period at the end and inserting '', and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

''(C) for each such finding counted under subparagraph (A), the agency shall specify—

''(i) the date of the finding;

''(ii) the affected agency;

''(iii) the law violated; and

''(iv) whether a decision has been made regarding necessary disciplinary action as a result of the finding.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(11) Data regarding each class action complaint filed against the agency alleging discrimination or retaliation, including—

''(A) information regarding the date on which each complaint was filed;

''(B) a general summary of the allegations alleged in the complaint;

''(C) an estimate of the total number of plaintiffs joined in the complaint if known;

''(D) the current status of the complaint, including whether the class has been certified; and

''(E) the case numbers for the civil actions in which discrimination or retaliation has been found.''.

SEC. 6. DATA TO BE POSTED BY THE EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION.

Section 302(b) of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended by striking ''(10)'' and inserting ''(11)''.

SEC. 7. NOTIFICATION AND FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ANTIDISCRIMINATION AND RETALIATION ACT AMENDMENTS.

(a) NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.—The Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended by adding after section 206 the following:

''SEC. 207. COMPLAINT TRACKING.

''Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of the Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act of 2017, each Federal agency shall establish a system to track each complaint of discrimination arising under section 2302(b)(1) of title 5, United States Code, and adjudicated through the Equal Employment Opportunity process from inception to resolution of the complaint, including whether a decision has been made regarding necessary disciplinary action as the result of a finding of discrimination.

''SEC. 208. NOTATION IN PERSONNEL RECORD.

''If a Federal agency takes an adverse action covered under section 7512 of title 5, United States Code, against a Federal employee for an act of discrimination or retaliation prohibited by a provision of law covered by paragraph (1) or (2) of section 201(a), the agency shall, after all appeals relating to such action have been exhausted, include a notation of the adverse action and the reason for the action in the employee's personnel record.''.

(b) PROCESSING AND REFERRAL.—The Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''TITLE IV—PROCESSING AND REFERRAL

''SEC. 401. PROCESSING AND RESOLUTION OF COMPLAINTS.

''Each Federal agency is responsible for the fair, impartial processing and resolution of complaints of employment discrimination and retaliation arising in the Federal administrative process and shall establish a model Equal Employment Opportunity Program that—

''(1) is not under the control, either structurally or practically, of a Human Capital or General Counsel office;

''(2) is devoid of internal conflicts of interest and ensures fairness and inclusiveness within the organization; and

''(3) ensures the efficient and fair resolution of complaints alleging discrimination or retaliation.

''SEC. 402. NO LIMITATION ON HUMAN CAPITAL OR GENERAL COUNSEL ADVICE.

''Nothing in this title shall prevent a Federal agency's Human Capital or General Counsel office from providing advice or counsel to Federal agency personnel on the processing and resolution of a complaint, including providing legal representation to a Federal agency in any proceeding.

''SEC. 403. HEAD OF PROGRAM REPORTS TO HEAD OF AGENCY.

''The head of each Federal agency's Equal Employment Opportunity Program shall report directly to the head of the agency.

''SEC. 404. REFERRALS OF FINDINGS OF DISCRIMINATION.

''(a) EEOC FINDINGS OF DISCRIMINATION.—Not later than 30 days after the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission issues an appellate decision involving a finding of discrimination or retaliation within a Federal agency, the Commission shall refer the matter to the Office of Special Counsel.

''(b) REFERRALS TO SPECIAL COUNSEL.—The Office of Special Counsel shall accept and review a referral from the Commission under subsection (a) for purposes of seeking disciplinary action under its authority against a Federal employee who commits an act of discrimination or retaliation.

''(c) NOTIFICATION.—The Office of Special Counsel shall notify the Commission in a case in which the Office of Special Counsel initiates disciplinary action.

''(d) SPECIAL COUNSEL APPROVAL.—A Federal agency may not take disciplinary action against a Federal employee for an alleged act of discrimination or retaliation referred by the Commission under this section except in accordance with the requirements of section 1214(f) of title 5, United States Code.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—The table of contents in section 1(b) of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (5 U.S.C. 2301 note) is amended—

(1) by inserting after the item relating to section 206 the following:

''Sec. 207. Complaint tracking.

''Sec. 208. Notation in personnel record.''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''TITLE IV—PROCESSING AND REFERRAL

''Sec. 401. Processing and resolution of complaints.

''Sec. 402. No limitation on Human Capital or General Counsel advice.

''Sec. 403. Head of Program reports to head of agency.

''Sec. 404. Referrals of findings of discrimination.''.

SEC. 8. NONDISCLOSURE AGREEMENT LIMITATION.

Section 2302(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (13)—

(A) by inserting ''or the Office of Special Counsel'' after ''Inspector General'';

(B) by striking ''implement'' and inserting ''(A) implement''; and

(C) by striking the period that follows the quoted material and inserting ''; or''; and

(2) by adding after subparagraph (A), as added by paragraph (1)(B), and preceding the flush left matter that follows paragraph (13), the following:

''(B) implement or enforce any nondisclosure policy, form, or agreement, if such policy, form, or agreement prohibits or restricts an employee from disclosing to Congress, the Office of Special Counsel, or an Office of the Inspector General any information that relates to any violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial, and specific danger to public health or safety, or any other whistleblower protection.''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DESANTIS. 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 material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 702, the Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act of 2017, introduced by my colleague on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the ranking member, ELIJAH CUMMINGS.

I should note that Mr. CUMMINGS is unable to be with us here today for this important bill. He is recuperating from surgery, and we wish him a speedy recovery.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 702 amends the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002, or the NO FEAR Act, to better identify and correct issues of discrimination throughout the Federal Government. Ranking Member CUMMINGS introduced H.R. 702 in response to problems identified in the Baltimore office of the Social Security Administration.

The bill requires Federal agencies to establish a system to track Equal Employment Opportunity complaints from beginning to end. This system must also track any disciplinary action that resulted from a finding of a discriminatory act.

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The bill also requires both the disciplinary action and the reason for the action to be included in the employee's personnel record.

Mr. Speaker, this bill implements notification and reporting requirements for instances of discrimination within Federal agencies. Agencies must provide a notice on an internal website if the agency or Equal Employment Opportunity Commission finds that a discriminatory or retaliatory act has occurred.

The bill requires agencies to submit a report to the EEOC if such an act has occurred. The report must include any disciplinary action initiated against an employee for discrimination or retaliation against another employee.

Lastly, the bill bars agencies from using nondisclosure agreements to restrict Federal employees from reporting waste, fraud, and abuse to Congress, the Office of Special Counsel, and Inspector General.

I thank Mr. CUMMINGS for his work on this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 702, the Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act of 2017, as amended.

I also thank my good friend, Ranking Member ELIJAH CUMMINGS, for his work on this measure and for his leadership and passion of our committee's ongoing efforts to ensure that Federal equal opportunity programs truly guarantee equal opportunity.

Most agencies are careful to ensure that their personnel policies protect employees' rights and that their EEO programs ensure that if discrimination does occur, employees can seek fair and timely redress.

Unfortunately, there have been instances in which agencies fail to meet the standards of a model EEO program. When that occurs, hardworking Federal employees are harmed.

For example, during the last Congress, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform conducted a number of hearings to examine how allegations of harassment and retaliation were handled at the National Park Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the Forest Service.

In the case of the Park Service, a former superintendent of the Grand Canyon, one of our premier parks, received a report in 2013 documenting multiple allegations of sexual harassment. But rather than determining whether further investigation was warranted or disciplinary action should be pursued, the superintendent attempted to bury the report.

A year later, more than a dozen current and former employees sent their allegations directly to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary referred those allegations to the Inspector General. After an extensive investigation, the IG found ''a long-term pattern of sexual harassment and a hostile work environment'' at the Grand Canyon River District.

The Inspector General's Office also identified more than 20 other individuals who ''reported experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment and hostile work environments,'' and the IG confirmed that previous reports of sexual harassment ''were not properly investigated or reported.''

As disturbing as these findings are, the Inspector General has also found instances of sexual harassment and retaliation at other parks, including iconic places like Yellowstone National Park and the Canaveral National Seashore.

While the Park Service has announced measures to address the serious shortcomings in its EEO programs, it is clear that deficiencies in these programs are longstanding and have hurt numerous employees.

Similar chronic problems have occurred at the Department of Agriculture. The EEO program there has now been the subject of two extraordinary letters sent by the Office of Special Counsel to the President of the United States.

In May 2015, the Special Counsel wrote to warn the President that USDA's civil rights program ''has been seriously mismanaged, thereby compromising the civil rights of USDA employees.''

Just last month, the Office of Special Counsel wrote again to the President, finding that ''while the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights has taken positive steps to improve its performance, based on the significant number of cases that are still subject to delays, OSC has determined that the agency response is unreasonable in part. USDA may need to devote more resources to the Office to ensure that cases are promptly processed and hold senior supervisors accountable for the mismanagement in this office.''

Such findings are not to be tolerated, and they highlight why this bill, H.R. 702, the Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act, is urgently needed.

This measure would require that the head of an agency's EEO program report directly to the head of the agency himself or herself. The measure would also require that an agency's EEO program be operated independently of its human resources or general counsel offices, ensuring that the EEO program is focused solely on protecting the civil rights of all employees and applicants.

H.R. 702 would strengthen the accountability mechanisms central to the effectiveness of the EEO process. For example, the bill would expand the notifications that agencies are required to provide when discrimination is indeed found to have occurred, and it would require agencies to track and report whether such findings resulted in any disciplinary action.

The bill would also prohibit agencies from attempting to gag employees by banning policies, forms, or agreements that seek to prohibit or restrict an employee from disclosing to Congress, the Office of Special Counsel, or an Office of the Inspector General any information that might relate to a violation of any law, rule, regulation, or waste, fraud, or abuse.

H.R. 702 is essentially identical to the bill we considered in the last Congress, which passed the House by a vote of 403–0. I urge Members to support the measure again.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I join with Ranking Member CUMMINGS in urging the Senate to move on this measure as expeditiously as possible, without the addition of extraneous and harmful amendments that might seek to curtail due process rights of Federal employees.

Any employee who engages in discriminatory or retaliatory behavior or who harasses another employee must be held accountable. The American public expects no less. Current personnel policies and practices are adequate to ensure that this can occur, and there is no need for any amendment to this bill that would undermine or weaken employees' due process rights.

Mr. Speaker, I talked to Representative ELIJAH CUMMINGS recently. He is doing great. He is full of fight and can't wait to get back here to Congress. We expect to see him shortly.

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

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill, and I wish Mr. CUMMINGS a speedy recovery.

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 702, the Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act of 2017, as amended.

I thank all of the bill's co-sponsors, including Representatives NORTON, SENSENBRENNER and JACKSON LEE, for working with me on this measure and for their commitment to strengthening federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs.

I also thank Tanya Ward Jordan, Paulette Taylor, and all the members of the Coalition 4 Change (C4C) for their years of work on this measure and their perseverance.

H.R. 702 is essentially identical to H.R. 1557, which was considered in the last Congress. That legislation passed the House by a vote of 403–0. However, the bill did not pass the Senate before the end of the 114th Congress. I am hopeful that this year, we can finally get this measure over the finish line and to the President's desk for signature.

I authored H.R. 702 to make long-overdue reforms of federal EEO programs to ensure that they are better able to protect the rights of federal employees and applicants for federal employment.

Federal EEO programs exist to uphold the guarantee of equal opportunity that is the right of every citizen in this nation and to ensure that any barriers impeding fairness in personnel decisions are identified and eliminated.

While the vast majority of federal workplaces comply with current EEO requirements, some federal agencies still have not met the standards of a model EEO program set forth by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

For example, in 2014, the EEOC issued a report on the Social Security Administration (SSA) that made 12 findings regarding SSA's failure to maintain a model EEOC program, ensure efficient management of the complaint process, provide uniform training to ensure equal opportunities, and implement effective and efficient anti-harassment policies and procedures.

The EEOC made more than 60 recommendations for reform of that one program alone.

Last year, bi-partisan investigations conducted by the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service found significant deficiencies in both agencies' EEO programs.

At both agencies, employees suffered when their complaints of discrimination were not handled in a fair and timely manner. Employees were also harmed by agencies' failure to safeguard complainants' personal information.

To help end these failings, my bill would require that EEO programs operate independently of an agency's human resources or general counsel offices—and that the head of the program reports directly to the head of an agency. This would ensure that effective implementation of the EEO program is prioritized at the highest level of an agency—and that it operates with the sole purpose of ensuring equal opportunity for all employees.

H.R. 702 would also strengthen the accountability mechanisms that are central to the effectiveness of the EEO process.

Further, H.R. 702 would make clear that agencies cannot impose any nondisclosure agreement on federal employees to prohibit employees from disclosing fraud or illegal actions to Congress, the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), or an Inspector General.

According to the 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, only 60 percent of federal employees agreed that they could, quote, ''disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal.''

The Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act would help ensure that federal employees can report discrimination without suffering retaliation—and that such reports will be thoroughly and fairly investigated and adjudicated in a timely manner.

Finally, as I close, I want to address some of the issues that arose during consideration of this measure in the Senate Homeland Security Committee last year.

I want to be crystal clear that I believe that supervisors who engage in discriminatory or retaliatory action must be held accountable.

However, this can be accomplished without curtailing any existing due process rights for federal employees and I will continue to oppose all efforts to roll back any due process right.

I urge all Members to support H.R. 702, and I hope that in this Congress, we can finally enact this measure into law.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 702, the ''Federal Employee Antidiscrimination Act of 2017.''

I support this legislation because it ensures agencies effectively implement their Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs and that federal employees are never prevented from disclosing discriminatory or wasteful actions to Congress, the Office of Special Counsel, or Inspectors General.

Let me express my thanks to Ranking Member Cummings for introducing this critical legislation that is essential to ensuring that our federal workplaces are free from discrimination, and that any barriers impeding fairness in personnel decisions are identified and eliminated.

This is not the first time we have addressed and offered legislation regarding workplace equality.

In 2002, the ''No Fear Act'' was first introduced in Congress and set the precedent for imposing additional duties upon Federal agency employers that are intended to reinvigorate their longstanding obligation to provide a work environment free of discrimination and retaliation.

On October 2, 2000, the House Science Committee held a hearing entitled ''Intolerance at EPA—Harming People, Harming Science?''

Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, an EPA whistleblower, won a 600,000 dollar jury decision against EPA for race and sex discrimination under title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

During that hearing, then-chairman of the Science Committee Congressman Sensenbrenner illuminated the dangerous precedent set by the EPA, stating, ''While EPA has a clear policy on dealing with employees that discriminate, harass and retaliate against other EPA employees, no one apparently involved in the Coleman-Adebayo or Nolan cases have yet to be disciplined by EPA.''

Mr. Speaker, no employee should fear voicing their concerns in reference to a safer more work conducive environment.

According to the 2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, only 60 percent of federal employees agreed that they could quote, ''disclose a suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal.''

We must do better and ensure employees have confidence that they can report an act of discrimination without suffering retaliation.

Employees need to know that EEO reports will be thoroughly, fairly, and timely investigated and adjudicated.

H.R. 702 would require that EEO programs operate independently of an agency's human resources or general counsel offices.

This bill requires the head of the program report directly to the head of an agency and the act would prohibit the use of non-disclosure agreements that restrict an employee from disclosing to Congress, the Office of Special Counsel, or instance of waste, fraud or abuse.

We often look at individuals or groups who step forward as whistleblowers.

This term has been used with a negative connotation to describe insubordinate employees, but history has shown us that whistleblowers are often heroes that have shed light on employers' illegal practices and as a result made the workplace better for future employees.

Mark Felt, the FBI agent known as deep throat during the Watergate Scandal of the 1970s.

Frank Serpico, New York police officer who confronted his department for the rampant corruption the leadership let take place.

Jeffrey Wigand, a tobacco executive who admitted that tobacco companies knew they were putting addictive chemicals into their cigarettes.

And Sherron Watkins, an executive of the Enron corporation who was vital in exposing the financial lies and frauds of the company.

All these individuals stood up against well-established corporations and agencies even when others doubted their claims.

We must protect these types of acts in Federal offices and successfully implement the Equal Employment Opportunity Programs (EEO).

Mr. Speaker, in a sense every Member of Congress is a whistleblower for the people in that uncovering and correcting problems in the agencies that administer the laws is an essential part of our oversight responsibilities.

As a senior member of the Committees on Homeland Security and the Judiciary, and as Ranking Member of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations, I understand the importance of safe and discrimination free workplaces.

By strengthening existing requirements to ensure federal EEO programs meet high standards, we are implementing the best practices available to combat workplace discrimination.

It is our duty as Members of Congress to be whistleblowers, bring attention to this pressing matter, and put a stop to injustices occurring in the workforce.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 702, 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.

MERLE HAGGARD POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1988) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1730 18th Street in Bakersfield, California, as the ''Merle Haggard Post Office Building''.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1988

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

SECTION 1. MERLE HAGGARD POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 1730 18th Street in Bakersfield, California, shall be known and designated as the ''Merle Haggard Post Office Building''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in subsection (a) shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''Merle Haggard Post Office Building''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DESANTIS) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DESANTIS. 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 material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1988, which designates a post office in Bakersfield, California, as the Merle Haggard Post Office Building.

Merle Haggard once sang about being a ''branded man out in the cold'' because, having served time in prison, ''no matter where I travel, the black mark follows me, I'm branded with a number on my name.'' He lamented that: ''If I live to be a hundred, guess I'll never clear my name.''

Well, Merle didn't quite make it to 100, but it is safe to say that the people of Bakersfield will appreciate seeing the post office bear the name of Merle Haggard. Merle can hold his head up and be proud of who he was.

Now this will be a time for celebration, but remember: ''We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee; we don't take no trips on LSD.'' So in honor of the Okie from Muskogee, illicit substances will be prohibited at the Haggard Post Office. It will be okay to just stay there and drink, but keep in mind that tonight could be the night the bottle let's you down.

We would also appreciate if people refrain from burning draft cards on Main Street, and please don't let your ''hair grow long and shaggy'' at the Merle Haggard Post Office. Waving Old Glory down at the courthouse will, of course, be encouraged.

Now, Merle didn't always make it easy for people, particularly his mother. His mother did everything she could to raise him right, but Merle didn't listen. So, like others, he turned 21 in prison, doing life without parole, and that left only Merle to blame because ''Mama tried, Mama tried.''

Merle appreciated all our fighting men and women who fought and died to keep America free. Merle was right to ask if we can really count on being free if we have to depend on ''some squirrely guy who claims he just'' doesn't believe in fighting.

Merle was a patriot who loved this country. If you don't love it, then just leave it. But be warned: ''When you are running down my country hoss, you are walking on the fighting side of me. . . . ''

May God bless Merle Haggard.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, that was a hard act to follow. I was transported to the 1960s. I was always a fan of Merle Haggard, but not necessarily his political philosophy. I don't believe the proposition that if you disagree with the policies of your government, you have to leave the country. I actually believe the beauty of America is that you get to disagree, you get to respectfully dissent, and you still get to live here as a full-fledged American.

I am pleased to join my colleagues in consideration of this bill to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service in Bakersfield, California, as the Merle Haggard Post Office Building.

Merle was born in Bakersfield in 1937, and, as my friend from Florida said, took a circuitous route to becoming ''the poet of the common man,'' as he was known.

As a teenager, he often found himself in reform school after committing petty crimes. By the age of 20, he was serving time, as Mr. DESANTIS said, in a California prison. It was that experience, however, that helped him turn his life around.

In prison, Merle Haggard rediscovered his love of music, and later put his talent to work on the Bakersfield club circuit. By singing about poverty, the struggles of the ordinary man and woman, and how music saved him during dark times, he captured the imagination and the attention of the entire country, and had 38 number one country hits.

In 1994, Merle was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. In 2010, he received a Kennedy Center Honors from President Barack Obama. After a long and fulfilling life, Merle died on his 79th birthday in April of last year.

Mr. Speaker, we should pass this bill to recognize the incredible accomplishments to our culture that Merle Haggard represents to celebrate his country music and his ability to give a voice to working men and women everywhere who keep their ''nose on the grindstone'' and ''work hard every day.''

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of H.R. 1988, and I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1630

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY), the distinguished majority leader.

Mr. MCCARTHY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. I am from California, but I happen to be from Bakersfield, California. I thank the gentleman for his creative use of the lyrics. Merle would be proud.

Mr. Speaker, when you take a look back at American history, you can see figures standing tall who spoke for the everyday working man. Following the long tradition of Whitman and Twain, Merle Haggard was a man who knew America instinctively because he lived an American life. It wasn't a life of the movies, but it was all the more compelling because it was all the more real. That is the reason they called him ''The Poet of the Common Man.''

Merle Haggard didn't have it easy. At the height of the Depression, his family searched for opportunity out West. Merle grew up with little means and lived with a past of mistakes and regrets.

So he sang. He sang in ''Branded Man'' of the stigma of prison, crooning ''I held my head up high, determined I would rise above the shame.''

He sang in ''Working Man Blues'' of the grind of doing his duty to his family, ''working as long as my two hands are fit to use.''

And he sang of his roots, not of power or wealth or status, but of pride in being ''an Okie from Muskogee,'' a place of leather boots, football, and Old Glory.

He found success and, more importantly, redemption in the music he shared with his country.

Now, the Bakersfield Sound changed country music, and it is a testament to Merle Haggard's talent that when you listen to his hits, from ''Branded Man'' to ''Mama Tried,'' to ''Big City,'' to ''Working Man Blues,'' or even to ''Okie from Muskogee,'' you not only hear the hardship and wisdom of a well-lived life, but you can hear the roots of so much of the music we still listen to today.

From a man who went from Bakersfield High School to San Quentin prison, to the Country Music Hall of Fame, a building doesn't seem like much. But I hope that when people pass by the Merle Haggard Post Office Building in