

I would also like to thank Energy and Commerce Committee leadership and staff for helping advance this bill to the floor, and I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers on this side, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers either.

Again, I want to commend my colleagues for pushing this legislation, for working with both sides of the aisle. Again, my congrats to my counterpart, my ranking member on the Energy Subcommittee, and all my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to vote "yes," and 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. UPTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2880, 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.

EXTENDING AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT TELEWORK TRAVEL EXPENSES TEST PROGRAMS

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4171) to amend title 5, United States Code, to extend the authority to conduct telework travel expenses test programs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4171

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

SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT TELEWORK TRAVEL EXPENSES TEST PROGRAMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5711(g) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by striking "7 years after the date of the enactment of the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010" and inserting "on December 31, 2020".

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect as though enacted on December 1, 2017.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Montana (Mr. GIANFORTE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. DEMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Montana.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4171, a bill I introduced with Congressman CONNOLLY, to extend Federal agencies' authority to conduct a telework pilot program.

The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 provided Federal agencies, and specifically the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, with the authority to conduct a pilot program to incentivize telework. The pilot program allows agencies to waive the reimbursement of travel costs for teleworking employees who return to headquarters for mandatory training programs.

Both agencies and employees benefit from this arrangement. Agencies benefit from having an additional tool for recruitment and retention. Agencies also realize cost savings by allowing employees to work at different locations.

For example, according to the USPTO, its telework program saved \$77.4 million in fiscal year 2016 alone. The savings are related to lower real estate costs and increased personnel retention.

In turn, teleworking employees can work from almost anywhere in the United States. The teleworking program moves USPTO employees into the communities that they serve. For example, in my State of Montana, the pilot program allowed the USPTO to place patent examiners in Bozeman, Butte, Billings, and Missoula.

Teleworking can grow opportunities in our communities that aren't close to highly populated areas that house Federal agencies. It has the promise of bringing more good-paying jobs to Montana and other rural areas across the country.

Now that agencies are seeing the cost savings associated with telework, this pilot program can be wound down. Absent congressional action, this program expired last week. However, the USPTO has requested an extension in order to allow it to budget for increased travel expenses related to paying for employees to return to agency headquarters in northern Virginia or one of its regional offices. This bill extends the program for 3 years.

I thank the congressman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY), for working with me in a bipartisan fashion to bring this bill to the floor. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Representative GIANFORTE and Representative CONNOLLY for their work on this bipartisan bill to extend the authority for agencies to conduct telework pilot programs for travel expenses. The current authority for this program expired on December 9 of this year, so passage of this bill is urgently needed. The bill extends the program until December 13 of 2020.

In February of 2012, the United States Patent and Trademark Office

used this authority to initiate the Telework Enhancement Act Pilot Program. This program allows USPTO employees to work throughout the country and waives the requirement that the agency pay their travel costs for mandatory trips back to its headquarters.

According to the USPTO, the program significantly expanded the agency's teleworking workforce and allowed it to hire and retain a highly skilled workforce. The USPTO also estimates that this program has saved the agency more than \$77 million in fiscal year 2016, including \$17 million in avoided real estate costs and nearly \$32 million in reduced recruitment expenses.

The agency also cites increased productivity, work hours, employee morale, and decreased environmental impacts as benefits of the pilot. Given its benefits, it makes sense to authorize an extension of this pilot program.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter that the Oversight Committee received from The National Treasury Employees Union yesterday supporting the bill.

THE NATIONAL TREASURY
EMPLOYEES UNION,
December 11, 2017.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: As National President of the National Treasury Employees Union, representing over 150,000 federal employees in 31 different agencies, I am writing to express NTEU's views on HR 4171, a bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to extend the authority to conduct telework travel expenses test programs, which is scheduled to be considered by the House tomorrow.

NTEU represents the trademark attorneys at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (PTO). The enhanced telework program has allowed employees to work and live in various communities across the nation, saving PTO office property costs and reducing employee turnover. We support the bipartisan legislation for a short-term extension of the pilot, which we believe has been a success for both the PTO and employees. We believe, with the expiration of this new extension, that the agency will have the experience to be able to allow national telework while covering employee travel costs.

Sincerely,

ANTHONY M. REARDON,
National President.

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

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I would make the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. DEMINGS) aware that I have no further speakers and I am prepared to close.

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

Mrs. DEMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the gentlewoman from Florida and the author of the legislation and manager for their leadership on this issue as members of the Oversight Committee and indicate that I rise to support H.R. 4171.

I am a member of the Judiciary Committee and have worked very hard on patent and trade issues, and particularly the patent office, and I see this as

raising the caliber of opportunity of different types of employees, which are very important. The patent office is a skilled entity, and clearly, this gives a greater opportunity for those individuals to work in places beyond Washington, D.C.

I also think it is important to note that telework is advancing, and it should not be considered less work than anyone who is at an office. I would hope that, as we look at legislation dealing with telework, that telework would not diminish the benefits that an employee gets and they would not be distinguished because they are working at home, if it was allowed, versus in an office.

So I think this is an important responsibility of the Oversight Committee, and clearly, I rise to support that. Keeping in mind that the House Judiciary Committee and the House Oversight Committee have worked together on a number of issues, I might just comment on, I think, an element that needs the cooperation of the Judiciary Committee as well.

I think, today, many of us heard of a statement being offered by the Oval Office. I would like to read part of it into the RECORD. It deals with the standards of accountability and protocol and decorum. It was sent by the Oval Office.

“Lightweight Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a total flunky for Chuck Schumer and someone who would come to my office ‘begging’ for campaign contributions not so long ago (and would do anything for them), is now in the ring fighting against . . .”—I will just say the Oval Office.

This requires oversight of the appropriate committees because it is a question of protocol, dignity of the office.

I would offer to say, as a woman, I am outraged that these comments were made. I don't know what it means to say “would do anything.” We all know that we do not have public finance, and members of various parties and levels of government raise fundraising dollars to communicate to their constituents. I would imagine that they go to any number of individuals who live in their State.

□ 1430

I think that Senator GILLIBRAND obviously went to an individual who lived in her State, but to silence a sitting Senator on her expression of outrage over treatment of women and to utilize a theme that has been used for decades regarding how women rise—this is the larger question, how women rise.

Are they Ph.D.'s? Are they law enforcement? Are they secretaries or doctors? Are they teachers? Are they in businesses in Hollywood? Are they in aviation? How do they rise?

This squarely talks about, overall, all women and, frankly, I think it is important, in an oversight capacity, that the women who have asked to be heard as it relates to issues of the Oval Office should be heard, as all, in a process of combining committees, such as

Oversight and Judiciary. That is our appropriate protocol.

All that I have said, I have always said that these issues should be allowed the appropriate investigation and due process, and that, I think, would be what the American people would want us to do.

So I thank the gentlewoman for yielding. I could not be on the floor, and I would be remiss, if I did not bring to the attention of my colleagues the dastardly comment that does not fit the office and, really, characterizes women, American women, since this is an issue and a statement made here in the United States, characterizes women in a highly inappropriate manner; and a professional colleague in an equal branch of government to be castigated by the Oval Office, I think an apology is warranted.

But I think an investigation is warranted for those women who have made allegations who have yet, to date, been heard, and I might add, they have yet, to date, been sued, so they have not had their day in court to be able to answer any such allegations.

I hope that our respective chairpersons and committees will investigate this in the most appropriate way forward.

And any woman that is of a generation of this time, millennials or other women, have had the allegations made against them that the only way they have risen is because they have acted in a certain manner, I don't think that that is appropriate and appropriate decorum.

With that, I support this legislation. I look forward to the answer to our request for full hearings on these women who have to have their say and to be heard regarding the protocols of the Oval Office.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman and Members of the body are reminded to refrain from engaging in personalities against Members of the Senate.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Montana (Mr. GIANFORTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4171, 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.

CONVERSE VETERANS POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. GIANFORTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1208) to designate the facility of the United States Postal Service lo-

cated at 9155 Schaefer Road, Converse, Texas, as the “Converse Veterans Post Office Building”.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1208

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

SECTION 1. CONVERSE VETERANS POST OFFICE BUILDING.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The facility of the United States Postal Service located at 9155 Schaefer Road, Converse, Texas, shall be known and designated as the “Converse Veterans 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 “Converse Veterans Post Office Building”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Montana (Mr. GIANFORTE) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. DEMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Montana.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GIANFORTE. 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 Montana?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1208, introduced by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR). The bill names the United States Post Office at 9155 Schaefer Road in Converse, Texas, after the veterans from Converse, Texas, for their service to this Nation.

I look forward to hearing more about the brave exploits of the Converse veterans from my colleague and the bill's sponsor, Representative HENRY CUELLAR.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues in consideration of H.R. 1208, a bill to designate the facility of the United States Post Office located at 9155 Schaefer Road in Converse, Texas, as the Converse Veterans Post Office Building.

Every day, brave men and women in our military make great sacrifices to defend this Nation and protect our freedom. While we can never repay them for their service, naming the Converse Post Office in their honor is the least we can do.

Mr. Speaker, we should pass this bill and name this post office so that we might recognize the selfless service of