

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

PUPPIES ASSISTING WOUNDED
SERVICEMEMBERS FOR VET-
ERANS THERAPY ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4305) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on dog training therapy, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4305

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 “Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act” or the “PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) According to the analyses of veteran suicide published by the Department of Veterans Affairs in August 2016 and titled “Suicide Among Veterans and Other Americans”, and in June 2018, titled “VA National Suicide Date Report”—

(A) an average of 20 veterans died by suicide each day in 2014;

(B) mental health disorders, including major depression and other mood disorders, have been associated with increased risk for suicide;

(C) since 2001, the proportion of users of the Veterans Health Administration with mental health conditions or substance use disorders has increased from approximately 27 percent in 2001 to more than 40 percent in 2014; and

(D) overall, suicide rates are highest among patients with mental health and substance use disorder diagnoses who are in treatment and lower among those who received a mental health diagnosis but were not at risk enough to require enhanced care from a mental health provider.

(2) The Department of Veterans Affairs must be more effective in its approach to reducing the burden of veteran suicide connected to mental health disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (in this section referred to as “PTSD”), and new, rigorous scientific research provides persuasive weight to the growing anecdotal evidence that service dogs ameliorate the symptoms associated with PTSD, and in particular, help prevent veteran suicide.

(3) Several organizations have proven track records of training service dogs for veterans with severe PTSD and dramatically improving those veterans’ quality of life, ability to re-enter society, and, most importantly, their chances of survival.

**SEC. 3. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
PILOT PROGRAM ON DOG TRAINING
THERAPY.**

(a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of the Act, subject to the availability of ap-

propriations, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program under which the Secretary shall make grants to one or more appropriate non-government entities for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of addressing post-deployment mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder (in this section referred to as “PTSD”) symptoms through a therapeutic medium of training service dogs for veterans with disabilities.

(b) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot program required by subsection (a) shall be carried out during the five-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the pilot program.

(c) CONDITIONS ON RECEIPT OF GRANTS.—As a condition of receiving a grant under this section, a non-government entity shall—

(1) submit to the Secretary certification that the entity is an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 that—

(A) provides service dogs to veterans with PTSD; and

(B) is accredited by, or adheres to standards comparable to those of, an accrediting organization with demonstrated experience, national scope, and recognized leadership and expertise in the training of service dogs and education in the use of service dogs;

(2) agree to cover all costs in excess of the grant amount;

(3) agree to reaccept or replace the service dog the organization provided to the veteran, if necessary, as determined by the organization and the veteran;

(4) provide a wellness certification from a licensed veterinarian for any dog participating in the program;

(5) employ at least one person with clinical experience related to mental health;

(6) ensure that veterans participating in the pilot program receive training from certified service dog training instructors for a period of time determined appropriate by the organization and the Secretary, including service skills to address or alleviate symptoms unique to veterans’ needs;

(7) agree to provide both lectures on service dog training methodologies and practical hands-on training and grooming of service dogs;

(8) agree that in hiring service dog training instructors to carry out training under the pilot program, the non-government entity will give a preference to veterans who have successfully graduated from PTSD or other residential treatment program and who have received adequate certification in service dog training;

(9) agree not to use shock collars or prong collars as training tools and to use positive reinforcement training;

(10) agree that upon the conclusion of training provided using the grant funds—

(A) the veteran who received the training will keep the dog unless the veteran and the veteran’s health provider decide it is not in the best interest of the veteran;

(B) if the veteran does not opt to own the dog, the entity will be responsible for caring for and appropriately placing the dog;

(C) the Department of Veterans Affairs will have no additional responsibility to provide for any benefits under this section; and

(D) the Department of Veterans Affairs will have no liability with respect to the dog;

(11) provide follow-up support service for the life of the dog, including a contact plan between the veteran and the entity to allow the veteran to reach out for and receive adequate help with the service dog and the organization to communicate with the veteran to ensure the service dog is being properly cared for; and

(12) submit to the Secretary an application containing such information, certification,

and assurances as the Secretary may require.

(d) VETERAN ELIGIBILITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For the purposes of this section, an eligible veteran is a veteran who—

(A) is enrolled in the patient enrollment system in the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code;

(B) has been recommended for the pilot program under this section by a qualified health care provider or clinical team based on the medical judgment that the veteran may potentially benefit from participating; and

(C) agrees to successfully complete training provided by an eligible organization that receives a grant under this section.

(2) RELATIONSHIP TO PARTICIPATION IN OTHER PROGRAM.—Veterans may participate in the pilot program in conjunction with the compensated work therapy program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT.—To remain eligible to participate in the program, a veteran shall see the health care provider or clinical team of the Department of Veterans Affairs treating the veteran for PTSD at least once every six months to determine, based on a clinical evaluation of efficacy, whether the veteran continues to benefit from the program.

(e) COLLECTION OF DATA.—In carrying out this section, the Secretary shall—

(1) develop metrics and other appropriate means to measure, with respect to veterans participation in the program, the improvement in psychosocial function and therapeutic compliance of such veterans and changes with respect to the dependence on prescription narcotics and psychotropic medication of such veterans;

(2) establish processes to document and track the progress of such veterans under the program in terms of the benefits and improvements noted as a result of the program; and

(3) in addition, the Secretary shall continue to collect these data over the course of five years for each veteran who has continued with the dog he or she has personally trained.

(f) GAO BRIEFING AND STUDY.—

(1) BRIEFING.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of the pilot program under subsection (a), the Comptroller General of the United States shall provide to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a briefing on the methodology established for the program.

(2) REPORT.—Not later than 270 days after the date on which the program terminates, the Comptroller General shall submit to the committees specified in paragraph (1) a report on the program. Such report shall include an evaluation of the approach and methodology used for the program with respect to—

(A) helping veterans with severe PTSD return to civilian life;

(B) relevant metrics, including reduction in metrics such as reduction in scores under the PTSD check-list (PCL-5), improvement in psychosocial function, and therapeutic compliance; and

(C) reducing the dependence of participants on prescription narcotics and psychotropic medication.

(g) DEFINITION.—For the purposes of this section, the term “service dog training instructor” means an instructor who provides the direct training of veterans with PTSD and other post-deployment issues in the art and science of service dog training and handling.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVID P. ROE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 4305, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

□ 1230

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

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act, otherwise known as the PAWS Act, introduced by Representative STIVERS of Ohio.

This bill has more than 300 cosponsors, which put it on the Consensus Calendar. It reflects this Chamber's desire to pass legislation addressing veterans' mental health, which I strongly support.

The bill calls for the VA to establish a 5-year pilot program to make grants available to appropriate nongovernmental entities "for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of addressing post-deployment mental health and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms through a therapeutic medium of training service dogs for veterans with disabilities."

Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in this room today can agree that dogs—and animals, more broadly speaking—make great companions. In fact, in 2018, Americans spent \$72 billion on their pets. Years of research have illustrated numerous positive health outcomes, such as lowering blood pressure.

I intend to vote "yes" on this bill; however, I do have concerns about this bill becoming law before VA's study examining the possible therapeutic benefits of veterans with PTSD receiving either a service dog or an emotional support dog is complete.

Service dogs and emotional support dogs are very different, and it is important that we understand the efficacy of providing veterans with PTSD with either type of dog. Relying on the dog for companionship is far different than using dogs as a form of behavioral health treatment.

Mr. Speaker, like any other treatment, therapy, or pharmaceutical provided to veterans, research must be performed so informed policy and treatment decisions can be made. A draft monograph outlining VA's findings is complete and currently undergoing peer review by the National Academy of Sciences. The VA anticipates having a final report to Congress not later than the end of July 2020.

Before this bill was placed on the Consensus Calendar, I had hoped to wait to have the findings of this study so that we could properly review and mark up this legislation, ensuring veterans receive effective, evidence-based treatments for PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, we are passing this legislation without scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of service dogs for the treatment of PTSD. However, I support this bill because its placement on the Consensus Calendar reflects the will of the Members of this Chamber, and years of research have shown positive health outcomes related to owning dogs for companionship.

When we receive the study, I intend to work with our Senate colleagues to improve and strengthen this legislation so that we can ensure veterans diagnosed with PTSD receive effective treatments.

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

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4305, as amended, the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act, or the PAWS Act.

This bill is sponsored by Congressman STEVE STIVERS from Ohio. STEVE is a brigadier general in the Army National Guard, where he wore our Nation's uniform for over three decades of service in Ohio and overseas in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Needless to say, he knows firsthand the toll that military service can take and the need to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs is equipped to provide our veterans with all the services and supports that they need to not only recover from their wounds of war, but to lead healthy, full, and meaningful lives as civilians. The PAWS Act would provide VA with an additional tool to accomplish that goal by providing grants to organizations to assist veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health challenges through service dog training.

Veterans participating in the program would be paired with a prospective service dog and work with a qualified service dog training instructor to train the dog as a certified service animal. At the conclusion of the training, if the veteran and the veteran's provider agree that it is in the best interests of the veteran, the veteran will be able to keep their dog, or it would be paired with another veteran in need.

The grant program that the PAWS Act would create is based on service dog training therapy programs at Walter Reed National Medical Center in Maryland and the Palo Alto VA Medical Center in California. Both of those programs are well established and have shown remarkably positive anecdotal outcomes for servicemembers and veterans who have gone through them.

It won't come as a surprise to any dog owner—me, included—that the

companionship and unconditional love offered by man's best friend has a powerful real-world healing effect. The old saying is, in Washington, "if you want a friend, get a dog." I am glad that this program will expand that effort as well as the unique assistance that trained service dogs provide to more of our Nation's heroes.

This bill is cosponsored by 321 of our House colleagues, a tremendous bipartisan show of support that is reflective of the desire of this body to care for those who have borne the battles and are struggling with invisible injuries as a result.

I am grateful to General STEVE STIVERS for his hard work getting this bill to the House floor today, and I am happy to support it.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Ms. SHERRILL), my good friend.

Ms. SHERRILL. Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman TAKANO for yielding.

I rise today in support of H.R. 4305, the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act. This important bipartisan legislation will create a pilot program within the Department of Veterans Affairs to give veterans access to treatment derived from working with service dogs.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the gentleman from Ohio, Representative STIVERS, for his tireless leadership on this legislation. I deeply appreciate his dedication to our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of veterans, between 11 and 20 percent, experience post-traumatic stress disorder. Too many of the men and women who serve our country return home with unseen trauma that can make it hard to carry out daily activities, like going to work or going to school. We owe it to our veterans to make sure that they have the resources they need to recover.

In November, I had the opportunity to spend some time with a Vietnam veteran named Walter Parker and his service dog, Jackson. Walter shared how his partnership with Jackson has dramatically improved his life. Jackson helps Walter participate in activities that we all take for granted, like going to the movies or the grocery store. Their bond has been instrumental in Walter's continuing recovery.

His story is not unique. Researchers, doctors, and veterans, themselves, all report the same thing: Service dogs soothe the invisible wounds of war.

Under the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act, the VA will partner with non-profit organizations working with veterans and service dogs to create work-therapy programs that help veterans learn the art and science of training dogs. After completing the program, the veterans may adopt their dogs to provide continued therapy.

Mission-based therapy has been proven to be a successful means of treating PTSD, and this legislation will enable

more veterans to access the care that service dogs can provide.

Mr. Speaker, Walter and Jackson and countless other vets and their service dogs are proof that this therapy works. We owe it to our veterans to explore creative ways to help them after they have given so much to our country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important and innovative legislation and give veterans the treatment they need and deserve.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I do want to give a shout-out to former Congressman Ron DeSantis, now Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida, who championed this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. STIVERS), my good friend.

Mr. STIVERS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DAVID P. ROE) for yielding time.

This bill is, indeed, a blending of a bill that Governor DeSantis had in the last Congress and a bill we had in the last Congress, and we now have 321 cosponsors on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, our servicemembers returning from war sometimes have invisible wounds. I served as a battalion commander in Operation Iraqi Freedom, and soldiers under my command came back with post-traumatic stress and, indeed, some even with traumatic brain injury.

All too often, we see the links between military service and mental health conditions, including post-traumatic stress, as well as traumatic brain injury and even suicide.

Mr. Speaker, we lose 20 veterans a day to suicide. Congress has to work to address that situation. Mental health and the suicide epidemic that are facing veterans can't be solved with a single solution, but it is important we look at this comprehensively and come up with as many building blocks as we can to address this crisis. That is why I introduced the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act, which is based on clinical evidence from Kaiser Permanente and Purdue University.

The PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act would establish a pilot program in the Department of Veterans Affairs authorizing the Secretary to give grants to local service dog training organizations so that they can work with veterans, and veterans can receive training to train service dogs and also end up with a service dog if it is appropriate for them.

This effort has been 10 years in the making, and it is time that we actually bring it to a conclusion. I am grateful that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle support it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give a special thanks to Representative KATHLEEN RICE, my lead Democrat cosponsor, and the many other folks who worked on this bill. I also want to thank the majority leader, STENY HOYER, for bringing it to the floor today.

Mr. Speaker, 321 Members of Congress don't agree on a lot, but they

agree we have got to address the problem of veteran suicide and give access to veterans to service dogs if the veterans have post-traumatic stress.

There is a Senate bill. This bill passed the House 2 years ago. My version of the bill passed the House 2 years ago but died in the Senate. There is now a Senate version with Senator TILLIS, Senator SINEMA, Senator FISCHER, and Senator FEINSTEIN. It is bipartisan. I am hopeful they will get that done in quick order here. We owe it to these veterans to give creative solutions to treat their mental health and their anxiety issues.

Since it was brought up, I do want to mention that this VA study was authorized in the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act. It is 2020. That is 10 years. In that time, it was started, studied for 4 years, halted, then it began again. It has been delayed three times, and now they say it may be out in June. I am hopeful that it is, but we can't wait any longer. Our veterans can't wait any longer.

In the interim, this has been studied at Purdue University and Kaiser Permanente, and the studies were conclusive: The efficacy of service dogs works. The results are undisputed. There is less anxiety. These veterans are on fewer drugs. There is a lower incidence of suicide.

We can't wait any longer to address this crisis. We must pass this bill today.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I urge them to support H.R. 4305.

God bless our veterans. It is time we give them the help they need.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. SLOTKIN), my good friend.

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act. I am incredibly proud to be coleading this bipartisan bill to connect veterans with service dogs in their communities and improve outcomes for veterans' mental health and well-being.

There are two amazing organizations in Livingston County in my district that train dogs and place them with veterans in need: Veteran Service Dogs in Howell, Michigan, and Blue Star Service Dogs in Pinckney.

In December, I had the chance to visit Blue Star Service Dogs for myself. It was incredible to see these dogs in action and hear directly from veterans about how service dogs are helping them heal from depression, PTSD, and so many other invisible service-related wounds.

Both organizations are doing amazing work for veterans in our community, and I want to salute them.

This bill before us today sets up a pilot program through the VA to partner with local nonprofits, just like the ones in my district, to create work-therapy programs for veterans to help expand the number of veterans who can access the benefits of training and adopting a service dog.

This issue is particularly personal to me. I am an Army wife. I am married to a 30-year Army officer, an Apache pilot. I have a step-daughter currently on Active Duty, a son-in-law on Active Duty, and my other step-daughter is a physician at the VA.

While we make the decision to send men and women to fight for our country, we make the decision to support them for the rest of their lives. That is a nonpartisan responsibility, and it couldn't be more clear or more urgent, especially as we recognize the staggering rate of suicide in the veteran community.

□ 1245

Every day, an average of 17 veterans are victims of suicide. Think about that. Within the community of veterans that served in Iraq and Afghanistan, more veterans have been lost to suicide than to combat, which is both devastating and unacceptable.

The PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act will have a real impact on improving the well-being of our veterans. All you need to do is talk to a veteran suffering from depression or PTSD to understand what adopting a dog does for their lives.

I am incredibly proud of what this bill represents: a group of Democrats and Republicans finding an area of strong common ground and pushing legislation to a vote that could have significant impact.

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. JOHN W. ROSE), my good friend and fellow colleague.

Mr. JOHN W. ROSE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act, or PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act.

I thank the distinguished gentleman from Tennessee for yielding me this time and for his service to the good people of Tennessee.

I also wholeheartedly thank Representative STIVERS for approaching me about cosponsoring this outstanding policy proposal. His leadership on this issue is truly appreciated by me, but more importantly, by America's veterans.

While we are enjoying a time of unparalleled economic growth in my lifetime, a safer and more secure Nation, and 243 years of enduring freedom made possible in no small part by the sacrifice of our servicemembers, we also live in a time when approximately 20 veterans are lost to suicide every day.

This heartbreaking reality calls us to action. Research has demonstrated the powerful effect of service dogs in the lives of those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. These loyal companions have been shown to lead to stronger mental health, greater purpose in life, and renewed hope.

Today, I stand up for our veterans in Tennessee and all of our veterans across the country who would find support from PAWS. I invite my colleagues from both sides of the aisle to

join us in supporting our veterans and vote for the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act.

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

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WALTZ), an Army veteran from Florida's Sixth Congressional District.

Mr. WALTZ. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of this important legislation, H.R. 4305, the PAWS Act.

As a combat veteran, I have personally relied on service dogs in battle. We all recently witnessed the important role that service dogs play in combat roles and in national security when we saw Conan, the Belgian Malinois, who participated in the raid that killed ISIS leader al-Baghdadi. Service dogs also play an important role in transitioning veterans back to civilian life.

There is no denying these connections. The support they provide our veterans puts that connection on an entirely different level of importance. Many of our veterans return back from their service not the same as when they left, and I can personally attest to that.

They have three bad choices: either they don't come home, they come home missing limbs, or they certainly come home—when you have been in combat—different mentally than when they left.

These invisible wounds often make life very difficult for our veterans who have served. We owe them. The least we can do is to provide a full menu of options to their medical providers when they need help, whether those are medicines, whether those are unconventional treatments like hyperbaric chambers, or whether they are service dogs. That should be one of the options that our providers can provide.

I had the personal opportunity to meet with several veterans who have benefited from these service animals in my district last year and their stories were just incredible.

The common theme amongst all of them was that they either completely eliminated or drastically reduced the amount of medication that they were on as a result of PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

Almost all of these veterans who had service dogs in their lives not only reduced their medications, but they got out more and they socialized more. The dog served as an important and positive forcing function in their lives.

I think this legislation is long overdue. This is long overdue for the VA to provide. I love the fact that it engages our veteran service organizations like K9s for Warriors which is just north of my district in St. Johns County, and others.

These dogs can be life changing, and they have been life changing, and they should continue to be, and they should be provided by us, by our society that owes these vets so much.

Our veterans deserve to live happy lives after their service, and we should do everything that we can to ensure their well-being. I urge my colleagues to pass this important bill.

I thank my colleagues Representative ROE and Representative STIVERS for their leadership, and we all should let them know and let these veterans know that we have their six and the House of Representatives stands with them on their path to healing.

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

Mr. DAVID P. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time, as I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this needed legislation and I associate my remarks with what Mr. WALTZ just stated.

Anyone who has ever had the joy—as I have through my entire life—to have those animals associated with you knows how uplifting and helpful it can be to these people. As has been mentioned many times, we have not been making a dent in our suicide rate, and it is time to start thinking out of the box.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly encourage my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers.

I ask my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 4305, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARCÍA of Illinois). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4305, 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.

PROTECT AND RESTORE AMERICA'S ESTUARIES ACT

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4044) to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to reauthorize the National Estuary Program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4044

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 "Protect and Restore America's Estuaries Act".

SEC. 2. MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE.

Section 320(a)(2)(B) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(a)(2)(B)) is amended by striking "and Peconic Bay, New York" and inserting "Peconic Bay, New York; Casco Bay, Maine; Tampa Bay, Florida; Coastal Bend, Texas; San Juan Bay,

Puerto Rico; Tillamook Bay, Oregon; Piscataqua Region, New Hampshire; Barnegat Bay, New Jersey; Maryland Coastal Bays, Maryland; Charlotte Harbor, Florida; Mobile Bay, Alabama; Morro Bay, California; and Lower Columbia River, Oregon and Washington".

SEC. 3. PURPOSES OF CONFERENCE.

Section 320(b)(4) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(b)(4)) is amended—

(1) by striking "management plan that recommends" and inserting "management plan that—

"(A) recommends"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(B) addresses the effects of recurring extreme weather events on the estuary, including the identification and assessment of vulnerabilities in the estuary and the development and implementation of adaptation strategies; and

"(C) increases public education and awareness of the ecological health and water quality conditions of the estuary;"

SEC. 4. MEMBERS OF CONFERENCE.

Section 320(c)(5) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(c)(5)) is amended by inserting "nonprofit organizations," after "educational institutions,".

SEC. 5. GRANTS.

Section 320(g)(4)(C) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(g)(4)(C)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding clause (i)—

(A) by inserting "emerging," after "urgent"; and

(B) by striking "coastal areas" and inserting "the estuaries selected by the Administrator under subsection (a)(2), or that relate to the coastal resiliency of such estuaries";

(2) by redesignating clauses (vi) and (vii) as clauses (viii) and (ix), respectively, and inserting after clause (v) the following:

"(vi) stormwater runoff;

"(vii) accelerated land loss;" and

(3) in clause (viii), as so redesignated, by inserting "extreme weather," after "sea level rise".

SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 320(i)(1) of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1330(i)(1)) is amended by inserting "and \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through 2026," after "2021".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MALINOWSKI) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MAST) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on H.R. 4044, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to lead this bipartisan reauthorization of the National Estuary Program, a successful nonregulatory program to improve the water quality and ecological integrity of our Nation's estuaries, a program with a long history of support on both sides of the aisle.