

Let's continue to support this amazing program and make the Digital Coast Act into public law.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN), who will explain and introduce this particular bill. The gentlewoman is someone on our committee who clearly understands the significance of mapping, especially for storm preparations and flood management and everything else.

I wish to congratulate Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN because she is the only one of us on the floor who just recently was returned here for a 4-year term.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member BISHOP for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1069. This legislation authorizes NOAA's Digital Coast Program and ensures coastal communities have up-to-date data and tools to prepare for storms, manage floods, restore shorelines, and plan for long-term coastal resilience.

NOAA's Digital Coast Program has been extremely valuable for jurisdictions like Puerto Rico, where we have 799 miles of coastline and 62 percent of our population lives in coastal municipalities. For instance, after Hurricane Maria devastated the island with powerful storm surge and flash floods, Digital Coast staffers updated their Coastal Flood Exposure Mapper to incorporate high-resolution flood maps for the territory. They also held training sessions on flood mapping and resilient infrastructure, allowing officials to visualize storm surge, high tide flooding, sea level rise, and tsunami scenarios in order to increase our preparedness for such events.

This bill would build upon this work, authorizing NOAA to continue providing comprehensive mapping information that allows planners and coastal managers across the Nation to make accurate decisions and smart investments. This bill will also require NOAA to focus additional data collection efforts on underserved coastal areas.

As Puerto Rico's sole representative in Congress, I know firsthand the importance of having reliable coastal data to help respond to emergencies, to build resilience, and manage water resources. Therefore, I strongly urge my colleagues to support S. 1069.

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RUPPERSBERGER) to speak on this bill.

(Mr. RUPPERSBERGER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Digital Coast Act, a bipartisan and bicameral bill that I have put forth for consideration by this Chamber the last 10 years. I have spent a decade pushing this legis-

lation because, while it is critical to coastal communities like mine in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, we all have a stake in protecting America's shorelines. But it is not just about protecting our environment, it is about protecting our economy. Our country's 95,000 miles of shoreline are home to more than 42 percent of our country's population and millions of businesses that supply most of our gross domestic product.

This bill's Republican House cosponsor, Mr. DON YOUNG, represents Alaska, a State with 44,000 miles of coastline. The fishing industry is their largest private-sector employer.

Every day, planners in our hometowns are asking questions such as: What is the storm surge in this community?

Or: How much is this bluff going to erode?

Or: What are the water level trends at the marina where we want to build a new dock?

Unfortunately, the current coastal maps and geospatial data they are relying on for answers are woefully inaccurate, outdated, and nonexistent. The Digital Coast Act will allow professionals at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to begin a comprehensive mapping process of our Nation's fragile shorelines.

Coastal communities will be able to use the data to better prepare for storms, manage floods, restore ecosystems, and plan smarter developments near America's coasts, harbors, ports, and shorelines. In Alaska, better mapping will improve search and rescue operations.

Also, NOAA will train decision makers at the local and State level on how to use the data sets to answer questions about storm surge, erosion, and water level trends. The data will also be available on NOAA's website for free and easy public access so that every citizen can leverage the expertise of the Federal Government.

This bill is more important now than it was a decade ago when I first introduced it. We are seeing more storms that are stronger, and sea level rise is accelerating. We can't wait any longer.

In addition to Congressman DON YOUNG, I thank Chairman GRIJALVA and Ranking Member BISHOP for their work in bringing this bill to the floor. Finally, I thank Senators TAMMY BALDWIN and LISA MURKOWSKI for championing this bill in the Senate.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support this bipartisan, common-sense investment in our Nation's coastal communities.

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

The Digital Coast Act will enhance Federal, State, Tribal, and local authorities' decisionmaking regarding coastal resiliency, mapping, and infrastructure planning. It is one of these good measures that we need to support. I truly support it. It deals with the entire coast of the Nation. It deals with

the coasts in other areas that are not yet part of the 50 States—yet—and it deals with the Great Salt Lake. I am sorry, it deals with the Great Lakes.

What I am saying is the only way you could improve this stupid thing is if you added the Great Salt Lake into it as well. But as part of the Intermountain West, I'm used to being ignored by the rest of Congress as they go merrily on their way, not realizing the kind of value that we have in the Intermountain West.

So despite that flaw in this particular piece of legislation, I support it wholeheartedly and I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this particular piece.

Mr. Speaker, I inquire of the gentleman from California if he has any further speakers.

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

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

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I request an "aye" vote, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1069, 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.

NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2020

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 910) to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 910

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 "National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020".

SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO THE NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM ACT.

Except as otherwise expressly provided, wherever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.).

SEC. 3. MODIFICATION OF DEAN JOHN A. KNAUSS MARINE POLICY FELLOWSHIP.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 208(b) (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)) is amended by striking "may" and inserting "shall".

(b) PLACEMENTS IN CONGRESS.—Such section is further amended—

(1) in the first sentence, by striking "The Secretary" and inserting the following:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary”; and
 (2) in paragraph (1), as designated by paragraph (1), in the second sentence, by striking “A fellowship” and inserting the following:

“(2) PLACEMENT PRIORITIES.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—In each year in which the Secretary awards a legislative fellowship under this subsection, when considering the placement of fellows, the Secretary shall prioritize placement of fellows in the following:

“(i) Positions in offices of, or with Members on, committees of Congress that have jurisdiction over the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“(ii) Positions in offices of Members of Congress that have a demonstrated interest in ocean, coastal, or Great Lakes resources.

“(B) EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION.—In placing fellows in offices described in subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall ensure that placements are equitably distributed among the political parties.

“(3) DURATION.—A fellowship”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to the first calendar year beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) SENSE OF CONGRESS CONCERNING FEDERAL HIRING OF FORMER FELLOWS.—It is the sense of Congress that in recognition of the competitive nature of the fellowship under section 208(b) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)), and of the exceptional qualifications of fellowship awardees, the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, should encourage participating Federal agencies to consider opportunities for fellowship awardees at the conclusion of their fellowships for workforce positions appropriate for their education and experience.

SEC. 4. MODIFICATION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF COMMERCE TO ACCEPT DONATIONS FOR NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 204(c)(4)(E) (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(E)) is amended to read as follows:

“(E) accept donations of money and, notwithstanding section 1342 of title 31, United States Code, of voluntary and uncompensated services;”.

(b) PRIORITIES.—The Secretary of Commerce, acting through the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, shall establish priorities for the use of donations accepted under section 204(c)(4)(E) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(E)), and shall consider among those priorities the possibility of expanding the Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship’s placement of additional fellows in relevant legislative offices under section 208(b) of that Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)), in accordance with the recommendations under subsection (c) of this section.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the National Sea Grant College Program, in consultation with the National Sea Grant Advisory Board and the Sea Grant Association, shall—

(1) develop recommendations for the optimal use of any donations accepted under section 204(c)(4)(E) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(E)); and

(2) submit to Congress a report on the recommendations developed under paragraph (1).

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect any other amounts available for marine policy fellowships under section 208(b) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)), including amounts—

(1) accepted under section 204(c)(4)(F) of that Act (33 U.S.C. 1123(c)(4)(F)); or

(2) appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under section 212 of that Act (33 U.S.C. 1131).

SEC. 5. REDUCTION IN FREQUENCY REQUIRED FOR NATIONAL SEA GRANT ADVISORY BOARD REPORT.

Section 209(b)(2) (33 U.S.C. 1128(b)(2)) is amended—

(1) in the paragraph heading, by striking “BIENNIAL” and inserting “PERIODIC”;

(2) by striking the first sentence and inserting the following: “The Board shall report to Congress at least once every four years on the state of the national sea grant college program and shall notify Congress of any significant changes to the state of the program not later than two years after the submission of such a report.”; and

(3) in the second sentence, by adding before the end period the following: “and provide a summary of research conducted under the program”.

SEC. 6. MODIFICATION OF ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM.

Section 204(b) (33 U.S.C. 1123(b)) is amended, in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by inserting “for research, education, extension, training, technology transfer, and public service” after “financial assistance”.

SEC. 7. DESIGNATION OF NEW NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGES AND SEA GRANT INSTITUTES.

Section 207(b) (33 U.S.C. 1126(b)) is amended—

(1) in the subsection heading, by striking “EXISTING DESIGNEES” and inserting “ADDITIONAL DESIGNATIONS”; and

(2) by striking “Any institution” and inserting the following:

“(1) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS OF DESIGNATIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Not less than 30 days before designating an institution, or an association or alliance of two or more such institutions, as a sea grant college or sea grant institute under subsection (a), the Secretary shall notify Congress in writing of the proposed designation. The notification shall include an evaluation and justification for the designation.

“(B) EFFECT OF JOINT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL.—The Secretary may not designate an institution, or an association or alliance of two or more such institutions, as a sea grant college or sea grant institute under subsection (a) if, before the end of the 30-day period described in subparagraph (A), a joint resolution disapproving the designation is enacted.

“(2) EXISTING DESIGNEES.—Any institution”.

SEC. 8. DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY; DEAN JOHN A. KNAUSS MARINE POLICY FELLOWSHIP.

(a) IN GENERAL.—During fiscal year 2021 and any fiscal year thereafter, the head of any Federal agency may appoint, without regard to the provisions of subchapter I of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, other than sections 3303 and 3328 of that title, a qualified candidate described in subsection (b) directly to a position with the Federal agency for which the candidate meets Office of Personnel Management qualification standards.

(b) DEAN JOHN A. KNAUSS MARINE POLICY FELLOWSHIP.—Subsection (a) applies with respect to a former recipient of a Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship under section 208(b) of the National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1127(b)) who—

(1) earned a graduate or post-graduate degree in a field related to ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources or policy from an accredited institution of higher education; and

(2) successfully fulfilled the requirements of the fellowship within the executive or legislative branch of the United States Government.

(c) LIMITATION.—The direct hire authority under this section shall be exercised with respect to a specific qualified candidate not later than 2 years after the date that the candidate completed the fellowship described in subsection (b).

SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS FOR NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 212(a) (33 U.S.C. 1131(a)) is amended—

(1) by amending paragraph (1) to read as follows:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry out this title—

“(A) \$87,520,000 for fiscal year 2021;

“(B) \$91,900,000 for fiscal year 2022;

“(C) \$96,500,000 for fiscal year 2023;

“(D) \$101,325,000 for fiscal year 2024; and

“(E) \$105,700,000 for fiscal year 2025.”; and

(2) by amending paragraph (2) to read as follows:

“(2) PRIORITY ACTIVITIES FOR FISCAL YEARS 2021 THROUGH 2025.—In addition to the amounts authorized to be appropriated under paragraph (1), there are authorized to be appropriated \$6,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025 for competitive grants for the following:

“(A) University research on the biology, prevention, and control of aquatic nonnative species.

“(B) University research on oyster diseases, oyster restoration, and oyster-related human health risks.

“(C) University research on the biology, prevention, and forecasting of harmful algal blooms.

“(D) University research, education, training, and extension services and activities focused on coastal resilience and United States working waterfronts and other regional or national priority issues identified in the strategic plan under section 204(c)(1).

“(E) University research and extension on sustainable aquaculture techniques and technologies.

“(F) Fishery research and extension activities conducted by sea grant colleges or sea grant institutes to enhance, and not supplant, existing core program funding.”.

(b) MODIFICATION OF LIMITATIONS ON AMOUNTS FOR ADMINISTRATION.—Paragraph (1) of section 212(b) (33 U.S.C. 1131(b)) is amended to read as follows:

“(1) ADMINISTRATION.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—There may not be used for administration of programs under this title in a fiscal year more than 5.5 percent of the lesser of—

“(i) the amount authorized to be appropriated under this title for the fiscal year; or

“(ii) the amount appropriated under this title for the fiscal year.

“(B) CRITICAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall use the authority under subchapter VI of chapter 33 of title 5, United States Code, and under section 210 of this title, to meet any critical staffing requirement while carrying out the activities authorized under this title.

“(ii) EXCEPTION FROM CAP.—For purposes of subparagraph (A), any costs incurred as a result of an exercise of authority as described in clause (i) shall not be considered an amount used for administration of programs under this title in a fiscal year.”.

(c) ALLOCATION OF FUNDING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 204(d)(3) (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(3)) is amended—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “With respect to sea grant

colleges and sea grant institutes” and inserting “With respect to sea grant colleges, sea grant institutes, sea grant programs, and sea grant projects”; and

(B) in subparagraph (B), in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking “funding among sea grant colleges and sea grant institutes” and inserting “funding among sea grant colleges, sea grant institutes, sea grant programs, and sea grant projects”.

(2) REPEAL OF REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING DISTRIBUTION OF EXCESS AMOUNTS.—Section 212 (33 U.S.C. 1131) is amended—

(A) by striking subsection (c); and

(B) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (c) and (d), respectively.

SEC. 10. REPEAL OF REQUIREMENT FOR REPORT ON COORDINATION OF OCEANS AND COASTAL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.

Section 9 of the National Sea Grant College Program Act Amendments of 2002 (33 U.S.C. 857–20) is repealed.

SEC. 11. TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.

The National Sea Grant College Program Act (33 U.S.C. 1121 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in section 204(d)(3)(B) (33 U.S.C. 1123(d)(3)(B)), by moving clause (vi) 2 ems to the right; and

(2) in section 209(b)(2) (33 U.S.C. 1128(b)(2)), as amended by section 5, in the third sentence, by striking “The Secretary shall” and inserting the following:

“(3) AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE.—The Secretary shall”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) and the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am a proud supporter of the Sea Grant College Program. In fact, I am the lead author of H.R. 2405 to reauthorize Sea Grant in the House. Today, I am proud of the bipartisan support this bill has garnered, and I am happy to stand in support of S. 910, the National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act championed by the chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, Senator WICKER. The Senate passed this bill by unanimous consent in September. The Senate overwhelmingly supports this bill on both sides of the aisle.

The House passed my legislation as part of the Coastal and Great Lakes Communities Enhancement Act back in December 2019, again, a great piece of legislation that for some reason didn't include the Great Salt Lake, but we can keep working on that. My hope is that we, once again, vote in support of this legislation today. This is an exciting day, as we have never been this close to getting the Sea Grant College Program reauthorized.

The Sea Grant College Program supports our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes through grants and contracts with 33 State-level programs. These programs support research, education, and advisory services that are crucial for our coastal communities. Sea Grant is incredibly efficient, too. For every Federal dollar appropriated, Sea Grant leverages nearly \$3 from partnerships among State universities, State and local governments, and coastal communities and businesses.

In 2017 alone, after being appropriated \$63 million, it is estimated that Sea Grant Programs helped regenerate \$579 million in economic impacts, created or supported 12,500 jobs, assisted 462 communities to improve their resilience, restored or protected over 700,000 acres of coastal ecosystems, worked with 1,300 industry and private sector, local, State, and regional partners and supported the education and training of over 1,800 undergraduate and graduate students.

In addition to reauthorizing and updating the Sea Grant College Program, this bill also makes important updates to the program's Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, which fosters our next generation of ocean and coastal policy managers.

The legislation also identifies Sea Grant spending priorities for the next 5 years, which include aquatic invasive species, oyster disease and restoration, harmful algal blooms, coastal resilience, sustainable aquaculture, and fishery research and extension.

My colleague on the other side of the aisle will likely have one main complaint about Sea Grant, and that is the decades-old fellowship program. Somehow I think my colleague across the aisle may believe the fellowship is a handout to Democratic offices. The truth is that Sea Grant, which has been around since 1979, focuses on training the next generation of ocean scientists and policy makers, and fellows end up in the offices where they can best prepare for future careers in marine science and policy. Sea Grant fellows have gone on to prominent positions in both Democratic and Republican administrations. In fact, the Trump administration's former Chief of Staff at NOAA is a fellowship alumni.

Further, this legislation will actually help level the playing field for Republican and Democratic offices vying for fellows by directing that NOAA ensure equitable distribution among political parties.

□ 1645

I would hope that my colleagues on the Committee on Natural Resources would take a step back and listen to the many Republicans representing coastal areas who strongly support this legislation. I thank Senator WICKER and all the cosponsors of my bill in the House for their support and their work on this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this program and vote in favor

of the bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Puerto Rico (Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN) on this particular bill.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, I thank Ranking Member BISHOP.

Mr. Speaker, I express my support for S. 910 to reauthorize the National Sea Grant College Program, which is a network of 34 university-based programs that support coastal States and territories, as well.

In 2019, the Sea Grant program generated over \$400 million in economic benefits and supported more than 10,000 jobs. In my district, the program, based at the University of Puerto Rico, has produced vital research to address erosion, has developed strategies for the sustainable use of fisheries, and has contributed to the island's tourism-based economy through its coral reef restoration efforts.

Puerto Rico's Sea Grant is also a critical source of funding for research projects that provide data for the development of sound management plans for our marine resources.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is crucial that we reauthorize and support the Sea Grant program, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of it.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN).

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 910, the National Sea Grant College Program Amendments Act of 2020, which would authorize roughly \$513 million over 5 years for NOAA's National Sea Grant College Program.

Mr. Speaker, representing a district almost completely surrounded by water in New York's First Congressional District, Sea Grant has worked to support our local fishermen and oyster growers, protect our beaches, and support marine science research that is essential for our local economy and environment.

Leading some of the largest bipartisan coalitions of lawmakers to ever support Sea Grant, with my Democratic colleague, Congressman JOE COURTNEY from Connecticut, we have helped secure critical funding over the years for Sea Grant through the appropriations process.

With imported seafood making up the vast majority of American's seafood consumption, this critical program will help strengthen local seafood businesses on Long Island and across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important bipartisan legislation.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, as now we come to some of the

realities of this particular bill and the procedures.

Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if we actually dealt with the good of the body and recognize that reauthorizations are important so that we can re-evaluate what kinds of programs actually exist and if they are still necessary. We don't do a very good job in Congress of doing that. We allow reauthorizations to lapse, and then we simply go on automatic pilot, unfortunately.

This is the situation with this particular program because the Sea Grant College Program expired in 2014 and has never been reauthorized by Congress since that time. The appropriators still put money into it, even though they are not supposed to do it. But once again, when we, as a Congress, fail to do the reauthorization investigation and hearings and prioritize, then we make major mistakes in what we are attempting to do. We certainly don't have the priorities that we should when these programs were originally started to make sure that they are doing what we originally intended them to do, or if, indeed, there needs to be a change, like including the Great Salt Lake in many of its provisions so that you actually do something positive for the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, Congress in the last year, fiscal year 2019, even though this was not an authorized program, still spent \$72 million to do that, even though it was eliminated from the administration's budget. The House in this fiscal year appropriated in the 2020 bill only \$71 million for this program.

There is, of course, a glitch in that appropriation, which simply means that unlike other Senate bills that are coming here to the floor, this one will not go directly to the President's desk. It has to go back to the Senate for some kind of a revote and reanalysis with it. But this is not simply a reauthorization of a program. This is a reauthorization that changes things, including of which is a much higher amount with that program.

So, beginning with this bill, this would change it not only from \$70 million; it would take it to the \$87.5 million for fiscal year 2020 and add a generous 5 percent increase to each year through 2024. In addition, it funds an additional \$30 million for six specific research and extension activities.

Now, once again, whether those are justifiable or not—it would be nice—that should be part of the discussion in a reauthorization program before you actually come up with these kinds of numbers that go into that. The increases won't necessarily result in more Sea Grant marine research or outreach because it also increases the percentage of funds that can be used by program administration.

Now, the CBO score of this bill is at \$513 million. A half-billion dollars for any program is simply a big deal if it is not considered in the context of the other priorities that this government

should have, and that is one of the programs and processes that should be done.

So, this bill, like its House companion bill, goes beyond simple reauthorization. It adds new priorities. It adds new programs that benefit certain offices more than others. I am not just going to contend that this has a disproportionate influence on certain bodies, but let's just say this provides for free office work, fellows that are placed in offices year after year.

In the latest list of congressional placements and their opportunities, out of 29 total spots in both the House and the Senate, only five were put in Republican offices. Maybe there is a reason for that. Maybe there is simply a process that we are not looking at in the reauthorization and the way this program is managed, which, once again, should be considered before you go through the reauthorization approach to it.

The problem is that some of these positions now go in there, and it should not be that Congress provides itself its own free staff, but that is exactly what this is attempting to do. Those free staffs are involved in drafting legislation that benefits the Sea Grant program, which is, of course, a built-in conflict of interest.

With those other conflicts of interests, there is another advantage that has now been built-in for these fellows that I don't think is appropriate and something we should actually think about properly before we even go forward with that and decide if these kinds of programs need to be done at taxpayer expense. The Sea Grant bill also gives preferential access to Federal jobs. This bill allows the direct hire of fellows by any Federal agency, regardless of if there are better qualified candidates.

So, fellows already receive a unique educational professional experience that provides advancement in opportunities that others in the same field may not have. Yet, they are now being asked to reduce the competition to get a job in the Federal workforce to help a select few in this program.

I am sorry, that is a process that is simply not in the best interest of good government. It is that process that needs to be revisited, that should be revisited.

Actually, this also eliminates some of the transparency. Right now, this program needs to report to Congress on a yearly basis. By this bill, the advisory board will have to report every other year to Congress.

I understand that the Sea Grant program is popular among some States, especially coastal States. Even as a representative from an inland State, I have to applaud the efforts for research and outreach that are conducted by Sea Grant universities and institutions, and I also don't object to fellows at all who are placed in the executive branch. But I have grave concerns regarding the politicized nature of this

program, the fellowship program. I have problems with the direct-hire incentives and authorities that are given in this particular program, also, without actually having some rationale for it, just the mandatory increase in spending that goes along with this type of program.

Therefore, I cannot vote for this particular piece of legislation. Obviously, for me, I will vote "no" and urge the rejection of this.

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

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

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman has no other speakers, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the broad bipartisan support for this bill and its House companion bill, and I urge an "aye" vote.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HUFFMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 910, 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.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY ACT OF 2019

Mrs. LURIA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 3587) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the accessibility of websites of the Department of Veterans Affairs to individuals with disabilities, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3587

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 "Department of Veterans Affairs Website Accessibility Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. STUDY ON THE ACCESSIBILITY OF WEBSITES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

(a) STUDY.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct a study of all websites of the Department of Veterans Affairs to determine whether such websites are accessible to individuals with disabilities in accordance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d).

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after completing the study under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on such study.