

The War Risk Insurance Program expires on December 31 of this year. Our borrowing authority proposal was opposed by the administration last year, so we worked with the administration and others in developing this alternative. H.R. 4058 would reauthorize the War Risk Insurance Program for 5 years until the year 2003. It also includes a provision that would allow an air carrier to be reimbursed almost immediately from its private insurance company should the Federal Government be unable to pay promptly because of some unforeseen circumstance or because the insurance fund had been depleted.

In short, if the Federal Government does not pay promptly, the airline can get the prompt payment from its private insurance company. The insurance company's prompt payment would then eventually be reimbursed by the Federal Government.

The War Risk Insurance Program is vitally important to this Nation and to our national defense. It was first authorized in 1951 and over the years has been improved upon during the reauthorization process.

The subcommittee held a hearing on this program in May of last year and has made great progress on this program.

The War Risk Insurance Program was used extensively during operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm to ensure aircraft carrier and troops and supplies to the Middle East. Without this program, the military would have had to buy more aircraft for this purpose, which would have cost taxpayers billions of dollars. Instead, commercial aircraft, with the protection of war risk insurance, were willing to take on these dangerous missions.

This is a good bill, Mr. Speaker, a needed bill, and I strongly urge its adoption.

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

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

Mr. BORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4058, a bill to extend and improve the War Risk Insurance Program. This is a little known but very important program. It ensures commercial airline flights to high risk areas, such as countries at war or on the verge of war, where commercial insurance companies will not provide insurance. These flights must be directed to supporting the foreign policy or national security of the United States.

Its largest, most recent use, was to support operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, ferrying our troops and equipment to the Middle East.

The bill before us today extends this program into the year 2003. It also provides us with a solution to a problem left unresolved from last year. During one of the Subcommittee on Aviation's hearings last year, GAO identified that there was a need for air carriers purchasing premium insurance to have a

better guarantee that if they suffered a claim in excess of the amount in the aviation insurance fund they would be assured of complete and immediate reimbursement.

Without this guarantee, significant problems could be created, especially for a small airline where the loss of one aircraft could be devastating. The solution contained in this bill would address this issue by making it easier for an airline to obtain prompt payment insurance from a commercial insurance company. Such insurance would ensure that the airline could obtain reimbursement for its loss from the insurance company quickly, even if the FAA's insurance fund was insufficient and Congress failed to replenish it promptly. The commercial insurer could then recover the money it paid to the airline when money was appropriated to replenish the insurance fund.

I want to commend the gentleman from Tennessee, Chairman DUNCAN, and the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. LIPINSKI, the distinguished ranking member, for having the patience to find an acceptable bipartisan solution to this issue, and I strongly urge all Members of the House to support H.R. 4058 because of its importance to our Nation's foreign policy efforts.

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

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

I simply want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BORSKI) for assisting us on this legislation, and I have no other speakers at this time so I simply urge support for this very important legislation.

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

Mr. SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN), that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4058.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4058, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

□ 1515

EXPRESSING CONDOLENCES TO THE STATE AND PEOPLE OF FLORIDA FOR LOSSES SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF WILD LAND FIRES

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 298) expressing deepest condolences to the State and people of Florida for the losses suffered as a result of the wild land fires occurring in June and July 1998, expressing support to the State and people of Florida as they overcome the effects of the fires, and commending the heroic efforts of fire fighters from across the Nation in battling the fires.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 298

Whereas during June and July 1998, wild land fires destroyed approximately 500,000 acres of land in northeast and central Florida, having an aggregate value of more than \$276,000,000;

Whereas the fires have affected 67 counties in the State of Florida;

Whereas the President of the United States issued a major disaster declaration for the State of Florida;

Whereas the fires have damaged at least 367 homes and 33 businesses;

Whereas the fires have caused business closures and have aggravated drought conditions, which will have a long-term impact on the economy of the region;

Whereas the fires have caused injuries to at least 95 people, the majority of whom are firefighters;

Whereas approximately 7,000 firefighters from 46 States have braved extreme conditions to assist firefighters in Florida in fighting the fires;

Whereas many agencies of or established by the Federal Government, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Forest Service, the Department of Defense, the Department of Transportation, AmeriCorps, the Small Business Administration, the General Services Administration, the National Guard, the American National Red Cross, and the Civil Air Patrol, have contributed vital support functions in response to the fires; and

Whereas many State and local government agencies have also contributed vital support functions in response to the fires: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) expresses deepest condolences to the State and people of Florida for the losses suffered as a result of the wild land fires occurring in June and July 1998;

(2) expresses support to the State and people of Florida as they overcome the effects of the fires;

(3) commends the heroic efforts of firefighters from across the Nation in battling the fires; and

(4) commends the many agencies of or established by the Federal Government and the many State and local government agencies that have contributed vital support functions in response to the fires.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. FOWLER) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BORSKI) each will control 20 minutes.