

is a noncontroversial bill. I support the bill.

Since this is a pilot project, we will know in 18 months' time how things have worked, and we will have an opportunity to make further adjustments should they be warranted. I think it is important that we all support this act today so that we do not disrupt the beginning of the pilot project.

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

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. 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 Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1280.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1430

POSTMASTERS EQUITY ACT OF
2003

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2249) to amend chapter 10 of title 39, United States Code, to include postmasters and postmasters' organizations in the process for the development and planning of certain personnel policies, schedules, and programs of the United States Postal Service, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2249

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 "Postmasters Equity Act of 2003".

SEC. 2. POSTMASTERS AND POSTMASTERS' ORGANIZATIONS.

(a) PERCENTAGE REPRESENTATION REQUIREMENT.—The second sentence of section 1004(b) of title 39, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by inserting "that an organization (other than an organization representing supervisors) represents at least 20 percent of postmasters," after "majority of supervisors,"; and

(2) by striking "supervisors)" and inserting "supervisors or postmasters)".

(b) CONSULTATION AND OTHER RIGHTS.—Section 1004 of title 39, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (h) as subsection (i); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (g) the following:

"(h)(1) In order to ensure that postmasters and postmasters' organizations are afforded the same rights under this section as are afforded to supervisors and the supervisors' organization, subsections (c) through (g) shall be applied with respect to postmasters and postmasters' organizations—

"(A) by substituting 'postmasters' organization' for 'supervisors' organization' each place it appears; and

"(B) if 2 or more postmasters' organizations exist, by treating such organizations as

if they constituted a single organization, in accordance with such arrangements as such organizations shall mutually agree to.

"(2) If 2 or more postmasters' organizations exist, such organizations shall, in the case of any factfinding panel convened at the request of such organizations (in accordance with paragraph (1)(B)), be jointly and severally liable for the cost of such panel, apart from the portion to be borne by the Postal Service (as determined under subsection (f)(4))."

(c) DEFINITIONS.—Subsection (i) of section 1004 of title 39, United States Code (as so redesignated by subsection (b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "and" after the semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking the period and inserting a semicolon; and

(3) by adding after paragraph (2) the following:

"(3) 'postmaster' means an individual who is the manager in charge of the operations of a post office, with or without the assistance of subordinate managers or supervisors;

"(4) 'postmasters' organization' means an organization recognized by the Postal Service under subsection (b) as representing at least 20 percent of postmasters; and

"(5) 'members of the postmasters' organization' shall be considered to mean employees of the Postal Service who are recognized under an agreement—

"(A) between the Postal Service and the postmasters' organization as represented by the organization; or

"(B) in the circumstance described in subsection (h)(1)(B), between the Postal Service and the postmasters' organizations (acting in concert) as represented by either or any of the postmasters' organizations involved."

(d) THRIFT ADVISORY COUNCIL NOT TO BE AFFECTED.—For purposes of section 8473(b)(4) of title 5, United States Code—

(1) each of the 2 or more organizations referred to in section 1004(h)(1)(B) of title 39, United States Code (as amended by subsection (b)) shall be treated as a separate organization; and

(2) any determination of the number of individuals represented by each of those respective organizations shall be made in a manner consistent with the purposes of this subsection.

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by this section shall take effect 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITFIELD). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2249, the Postmasters Equity Act, was introduced by my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH). The gentleman chairs the Committee on Government Reform's Special Panel on Postal Re-

form and Oversight and has been a leader in Congress on postal issues. I am proud to support this legislation along with the members of this special panel, as well as the chairman and ranking member of the full committee, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN).

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2249 affords postmasters the same options given to postal supervisors when negotiating pay and benefits with the U.S. Postal Service. This bill would extend to postmasters and nonunion postal employees the fact-finding procedures already established under current law for postal supervisors. The fact-finding process allows for an unbiased review of issues in dispute during negotiations, as well as the ability to issue nonbinding recommendations to resolve those issues. Currently, without this right, postmasters lack any form of recourse when pay talks under the consultation process fail.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a matter of fairness. Postmasters deserve the same option available to postal supervisors, and the bill would produce an improved and fair consultation process. Frankly, I think it is a change most of us feel is long overdue.

The Committee on Government Reform believes adding a fact-finding option to the consultation process for postmasters will help strengthen their role in improving the quality of mail service for postal patrons and also in managing local post offices. Their role has been eroded over the years, especially for postmasters at small- and medium-sized post offices who serve as front line managers.

The Nation's two postmasters' organizations, the National League of Postmasters and the National Association of Postmasters of the United States, support this legislation.

The Postal Service Reorganization Act of 1970 created a consultative process for postmasters and other nonunion postal employees to negotiate pay and benefits but did not include postmasters in a fact-finding process subsequently provided to other management. Postmasters are often the heart and soul of the community. In many cases, they are the community's only link to the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we do what we can to support their work in the 38,000 post offices across the country. I am pleased that the House is considering this bill today.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from New York for introducing H.R. 2249 and urge its passage, and I would also obviously commend the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), who is a very active person on issues dealing with labor and management issues.

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

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

I want to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr.

SHAYS), for the work he has done on this bipartisan bill. It is an important and good bill that encourages the kinds of problem-solving and labor management relations that I am sure the whole House would want to embrace.

H.R. 2249 was introduced on May 22, 2003, by the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS). This measure would amend chapter 10 of title 39, U.S.C., to include postmasters and postmasters; organizations in the process for the development and planning of pay policies and benefits.

H.R. 2249 is cosponsored by the entire Committee on Government Reform Special Panel on Postal Reform and Oversight. On June 17, the Senate Government Affairs Committee unanimously approved S. 678, the Postmasters Equity Act of 2003, and on June 19, the House Committee on Government Reform reported H.R. 2249 out of committee on a voice vote.

During the 96th Congress, President Carter signed into law legislation creating a fact-finding process for resolving disputes over pay and benefits and to make recommendations to the postal service. It did not provide for arbitration of the disputes and the recommendations were not binding on the Postmaster General. However, the law only applied to postal supervisors, not postmasters.

H.R. 2249 would extend to the postmasters the option of a fact-finding panel to make nonbinding recommendations to the postal service. Currently, when pay and benefit discussions between the postal service and postmasters fail, postmasters have no recourse and have to accept what is offered by the postal service. Passage of H.R. 2249 would bring consistency in the manner by which two categories of postal managers negotiate with the postal service over pay and benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I urge swift adoption of this bill.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2249.

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.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAT THERE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED A NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER WEEK

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 240) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that there should be established a National

Community Health Center Week to raise awareness of health services provided by community, migrant, public housing, and homeless health centers, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 240

Whereas community, migrant, public housing, and homeless health centers are non-profit, community owned and operated health providers and are vital to the Nation's communities;

Whereas there are more than 1,000 such health centers serving 13,000,000 people at more than 4,000 health delivery sites, spanning urban and rural communities in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands;

Whereas such health centers have provided cost-effective, high-quality health care to the Nation's poor and medically underserved (including the working poor, the uninsured, and many high-risk and vulnerable populations), acting as a vital safety net in the Nation's health delivery system, meeting escalating health needs, and reducing health disparities;

Whereas these health centers provide care to 1 of every 5 low-income babies born in America, 1 of every 8 uninsured individuals, 1 of every 9 Medicaid beneficiaries, 1 of every 9 people of color, and 1 of every 10 rural Americans, and these Americans would otherwise lack access to health care;

Whereas these health centers and other innovative programs in primary and preventive care reach out to almost 750,000 homeless persons and nearly 850,000 farmworkers;

Whereas these health centers make health care responsive and cost effective by integrating the delivery of primary care with aggressive outreach, patient education, translation, and enabling support services;

Whereas these health centers increase the use of preventive health services such as immunizations, Pap smears, mammograms, and glaucoma screenings;

Whereas in communities served by these health centers, infant mortality rates have been reduced between 10 and 40 percent;

Whereas these health centers are built by community initiative;

Whereas Federal grants provide seed money empowering communities to find partners and resources and to recruit doctors and needed health professionals;

Whereas Federal grants on average contribute 25 percent of such a health center's budget, with the remainder provided by State and local governments, Medicare, Medicaid, private contributions, private insurance, and patient fees;

Whereas these health centers are community oriented and patient focused;

Whereas these health centers tailor their services to fit the special needs and priorities of communities, working together with schools, businesses, churches, community organizations, foundations, and State and local governments;

Whereas these health centers contribute to the health and well-being of their communities by keeping children healthy and in school and helping adults remain productive and on the job;

Whereas these health centers engage citizen participation and provide jobs for 60,000 community residents; and

Whereas the establishment of a National Community Health Center Week for the week beginning on August 10, 2003, would raise awareness of the health services provided by these health centers: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(1) there should be established a National Community Health Center Week to raise awareness of health services provided by community, migrant, public housing, and homeless health centers; and

(2) the President should issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States and interested organizations to observe such a week with appropriate programs and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the legislation under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 240, introduced by my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), commends the invaluable work of community health centers across the country.

As the text of this resolution states, there are over 1,000 health centers in the U.S. that provide outstanding health-related services to primarily low-income individuals. The vast majority of these care centers welcome all patients, regardless of their health coverage or ability to pay. Patients pay what they can afford at these facilities, and virtually no one in need is ever turned away. Those who seek help receive first-rate care at a fraction of the standard cost.

In addition to patient fees, community health centers are supported by Federal grants and contributions from State and local governments, Medicare, and private interests.

On behalf of the House, I want to join with the gentleman from Illinois and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) in praising the compassionate work of the thousands of employees and volunteers at community health centers across our great Nation. These care givers help so many, and this resolution intends to recognize their selfless efforts.

In addition, I hope the House's consideration of House Resolution 240 today will raise awareness of the services provided by the community health centers to all Americans who seek high-quality health care.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from Illinois for introducing House Resolution 240. I urge all Members to support its adoption.

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

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