

I want to thank the gentlewoman from California for her work on this bill today. I would also like to thank the gentleman from California (Mr. COX) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON), from the Committee on Homeland Security; as well as the gentleman from New York (Mr. KING), chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science, and Technology; and the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG) of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure for all of their hard work and determination in bringing this bill forward. They worked well together. This is a bipartisan bill.

The Rules Committee met just several days ago and heard how the ranking member and Chairman COX put a great work package together. The Rules Committee decided to help out a little bit. We have made in order with this rule three Democrat amendments and two Republican amendments that will be part of this wonderful bill that will be debated in just a few minutes here in this House. I am very proud of the work that we have accomplished together. I am very proud of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COX. 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 H.R. 1544.

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

There was no objection.

#### FASTER AND SMARTER FUNDING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 269 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1544.

□ 1127

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1544) to provide faster and smarter funding for first responders, and for other purposes, with Mr. CALVERT in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. COX) and the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COX).

Mr. COX. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1544, the Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act. I am here on the floor today with the ranking member of the Committee on Homeland Security, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON). He and I are here to argue today on behalf of a bill that is strongly endorsed by every single Republican and Democratic member of the Committee on Homeland Security. More than that, this legislation is supported by the Bush administration. We have received a formal statement of administration support for this bill. It is strongly endorsed by the 9/11 Commission whose recommendation that first responder funding be placed on a risk basis this bill implements. It is endorsed by scores of first responder groups, the men and women on the front lines for whom this money is intended. They worked with us over a period of over 2 years, first to identify the problems in the current grant-making system for billions of homeland security and terrorism preparedness dollars and, second, to develop a solution.

The solution that today's bill presents is a simple one. We are going to move away from political formulas for allocating these billions of dollars and toward a system that relies on the intelligence that the American taxpayer already purchases at the price of billions of dollars every year, information about terrorist capabilities and intentions, information about our own critical infrastructure and vulnerabilities and information about the potential consequences of different kinds of terrorist attacks. In combination, this mix of threat, vulnerability and consequence is called risk. Funding for first responders in the future is going to be based upon risk. That is what this bill is all about.

And we solve the second problem. Of the over \$30 billion in terrorism preparedness moneys that the Federal Government has made available to States and localities since September 11, some 60 percent of it is not yet spent. It is stuck in the administrative pipeline.

□ 1130

There are a number of reasons for this that our committee has discovered through field hearings across the country, hearings here in Washington, and our own investigation. But at bottom it is this: right now there is an "ad hocery" to the way that moneys are passed around the country. There is no predictability about when the funds might arrive, whether reimbursement will be there. And the planning, as a result, tends to take place after the money is received, slowing things down.

In our new system, the planning will be moved at the front end of the process. Every State which already has a

statewide terrorism preparedness plan will ensure that when these applications for grants are made, they are directly tied to that statewide plan and also directly tied to the achievement of national objectives for first responder preparedness.

We will have clear standards for the first responders so that they will not have these kinds of questions about reimbursement that have plagued them in the past. We will know that what we are buying in the form of equipment and training will be directly tied to national terrorism preparedness goals.

In recent days, there has been a fair amount of press coverage about abuses of homeland security spending. For example, right here in Washington, D.C., we learned that \$100,000 of this grant money meant for first responder terrorism preparedness was instead spent on a Dale Carnegie course for sanitation workers, another \$100,000 was spent to develop a rap song purportedly to educate young people about how to be prepared in the case of a terrorist attack.

These kinds of abuses will come to an end as a result of this legislation, and our money will be directed toward keeping our first responders, who are not only first in line to protect us but first in line for the terrorists, the first to die if this system does not work right, keeping these people well trained and well equipped.

I would like to thank, in addition to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. THOMPSON), ranking member, the other members of the Committee on Homeland Security. There has been a great deal of work that has gone into this bill. The last step in bringing this to the floor was a 13-hour markup in our committee. I think what we will find today, Mr. Chairman, is that this debate will go forward in a very bipartisan fashion. We might not agree about all the details of this legislation. We may not agree when we go to conference with the Senate. And when we come back with a conference report, hopefully in just a few weeks or maybe a few months, we may not agree on every detail.

But there is a big change in this bill that we all agree on, and that is that henceforth moneys for terrorism preparedness that go from Washington to States and localities to our police, to our firefighters, to our EMS personnel, to people in hospitals who will be there in case of a biological attack or indeed to treat the wounded in case of any attack, that the people who get these moneys will be assured that, first, the moneys will arrive soon, on time, right after we want them to be available; and, second, they will know how to spend it and they will know, when they spend it in accordance with their plans, they will get reimbursed for it. This will move America in the direction that we need to go to be prepared for another terrorist attack.

A great deal of our work in the Committee on Homeland Security is focused on preventing terrorist attacks,