

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this very timely and appropriate resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I would now like to recognize for as much time as he may consume the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO), the sponsor of the resolution.

Mr. SERRANO. I thank the gentleman for the time, and I thank both him and the ranking member for the support.

Too often we take for granted those places where we live in terms of the landmarks that are around us, and this is a celebration of a roadway that—it was stated before—it was set up or thought of originally to link the borough of Manhattan to the Bronx, but it became much more than that. It became a cultural icon. It became part of a community. And as the city grew and up to today, in its 100th anniversary, it has become grander year by year.

We are now celebrating 100 years of the Grand Concourse, and this, as said, was designed by a French immigrant in 1894, and when it opened in 1909, it was something spectacular that had not been seen before. Those of you who have come on many occasions, I'm sure—and hopefully in the future—to visit the Bronx and to visit Yankee Stadium will know that the Grand Concourse, that 4-mile thoroughfare that stretches from 138th Street to Van Cortland in my borough, the Bronx, is really majestic in form and so full of history.

The Grand Concourse has the largest collection of Art Deco buildings in the United States, and those Art Deco buildings are those that you walk into and the lobbies are so special with the artwork and the murals that were painted, especially during World War II and in the late 1930s. Those buildings are now part of the National Registry.

In accordance, the Grand Concourse itself has been designated and registered as a National Historic Place and has also been designated as a special preservation district by the city of New York.

And as was mentioned before, if you go to the Grand Concourse you will see the cottage known as Poe Cottage where Edgar Allan Poe wrote the poem "Annabel Lee," and that is still standing there.

Many folks, as we mentioned today, have lived on the Grand Concourse. Of course I live on the Grand Concourse, and I certainly did not have the kind of year that Babe Ruth had in 1927, but I've had a pretty good year in this past year.

This Congress saw fit a couple years ago to designate \$18 million that was used to renovate parts of the Grand Concourse and its infrastructure. That was in January of 2006. And now as part of that celebration, the Bronx Museum of the Arts is celebrating the roadway in its exhibition "Intersections: The Grand Concourse at 100."

What's interesting about the Grand Concourse, I believe, is that it mirrors so much of what New York City is and what this country is. Because as you travel the Concourse not only physically but through its history, you see the different groups of people who came to New York, who came to the Bronx, who settled on the Concourse, as we called it, and became part of America.

And so as we see people enjoying the park and enjoying and socializing on the Concourse, we see the different groups that have arrived from throughout the world and from my birthplace of Puerto Rico.

The Grand Concourse has, for them, fulfilled and exceeded its planners' intentions over a series of generations—occupying a central place in the hearts and minds of Bronxites past and present.

So I have come here today in support of this resolution. I would hope everyone votes for it. I thank the committee, the chairman, and the ranking member for their support.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 907, recognizing the Grand Concourse on its 100th anniversary as the preeminent thoroughfare in the borough of the Bronx, which serves as an important nexus of commerce and culture for the City of New York. I commend the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO) for his work on this Resolution. Designed by Louis Aloys Risse and opened to the public in 1909, this beautiful, tree-lined thoroughfare was first conceived of in 1890 as a means of connecting the borough of Manhattan to the northern Bronx.

The original cost of the project was \$14 million, the equivalent of \$340 million today. Over the past 100 years, this investment has leveraged significant private and public economic development activity in the Bronx, and has served as the backdrop to many historic New York City landmarks. Among these landmarks is the Loews Paradise Theater—at one time the largest movie theater in New York City—which was constructed in 1929 along the Grand Concourse. In 1923, the old Yankee Stadium opened near the Grand Concourse at 161st Street and has remained an important landmark in the surrounding Bronx community ever since.

Over the course of its 100 years, the Grand Concourse has played a longstanding role in defining the Bronx community, serving as the central north-south artery of the borough. For over 4 miles, the Grand Concourse is lined by several parks, fountains, and other pedestrian-friendly community treasures. The apartment buildings along the Grand Concourse have been home to the likes of Babe Ruth, Stanley Kubrick, Milton Berle and other famous New Yorkers over the years.

Reflecting much of the tumultuous history of the Bronx itself, the Grand Concourse is preparing for the rebirth and restoration of key social, economic and environmental infrastructure. Recently, \$18 million was committed to upgrading the Grand Concourse to make it more pedestrian-friendly and to restore the roadway's beauty that has made it vital to the cultural and economic development of the Bronx for 100 years.

Mr. Speaker, it is for these great contributions to the City of New York and to the Borough of the Bronx over the past 100 years that I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H. Res. 907.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Grand Concourse. As a proud, lifelong resident of the Bronx, I am pleased to co-sponsor H. Res. 907 recognizing the Grand Concourse as one of the most important and historic commerce and cultural centers of New York City.

The Grand Concourse is both the backbone and the heart of the Bronx. Each and every day, thousands of Bronxites travel up and down the concourse, connecting our borough from the north and south of the borough. It unifies the Bronx and enables people to interact and frequent the scores of businesses and cultural landmarks which run up and down the highway.

I grew up only four blocks from the Grand Concourse, and I have very fond memories of those days and the time spent along the thoroughfare. So much of my life, and the lives of my constituents, are tied to the Grand Concourse and I would not trade one moment of it for anything. As a child I watched films at the Loews Theater, I've attended numerous games at Yankee Stadium, and driven north along the Grand Concourse to visit Van Cortlandt Park.

I look forward to the start of the next 100 years in the life of the Grand Concourse, and Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to come to the Bronx and do the same.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I urge support of this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, we have no further speakers, and as a result, I yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 907.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO EXPEDITE THE PROCESSING OF PERMITS

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4165) to extend through December 31, 2010, the authority of the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities to expedite the processing of permits.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4165

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FUNDING TO PROCESS PERMITS.

Section 214(c) of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (33 U.S.C. 2201 note; 114 Stat. 2594; 119 Stat. 2169; 120 Stat. 318; 120 Stat. 3197; 121 Stat. 1067) is amended by striking “2009” and inserting “2010”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 4165.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4165. This bill would extend section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 for another year through December 31, 2010. Section 214 is currently authorized through December 31, 2009.

The section 214 program allows local governments to fund additional U.S. Army Corps of Engineers staff time to expedite the processing of permits for infrastructure and ecosystem restoration projects. Section 214 was enacted by Congress because the Corps of Engineers' permitting process had become cumbersome for both the Corps staff and applicants as the number of permit applications rose.

By funding additional specific staff to work on specific, time-intensive permits, existing Corps staff are able to process significant current backlogs more quickly. Funding for additional Corps staff has resulted in a reduction of permanent wait times not only for the funding entity, but also for any individual or organization seeking a permit. As a result, local governments are able to move forward with infrastructure and ecosystem restoration projects.

Section 214 is currently being used by over 41 public agencies in 20 separate Corps districts. The city of Seattle in my home State of Washington was the first public entity in the country to develop and use this facilitated permitting process. The city has used the section 214 program for 285 projects representing over \$1.1 billion in capital investments. Seven years of using the program has resulted in an estimated cost savings of \$10.6 million. The average review time per project has been reduced from over 808 days to an average of between 47–166 days.

In a region where we must balance the most difficult environmental issues

in the country with the second-highest commerce and trade demands of any region in the country, section 214 has become key to overcoming permitting delays and other challenges.

The authority granted by section 214 by the WRDA 2000 has worked well in practice. This authority needs to be renewed so the additional staff can remain on the job without interruption. Therefore, I urge the House to pass H.R. 4165.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in qualified support of H.R. 4165, to authorize an extension of the Army Corps of Engineers' section 214 program. Section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 allows the Army Corps of Engineers to accept and expand funds provided by non-Federal public entities to hire additional personnel to process regulatory permits.

Mr. Speaker, I say I offer qualified support for H.R. 4165 because while this legislation is needed, my colleague from Texas (Mr. OLSON) has offered a better piece of legislation. Mr. OLSON's legislation, H.R. 4162, will authorize a permanent extension of the program—not a 1-year temporary extension offered by H.R. 4165. The Congress has been forced to temporarily expand this program five times since it was authorized by the Water Resources Development Act in 2000, yet the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has heard from Members on both sides of the aisle supporting permanent extension of the 214 program.

I have heard no Member object to a permanent expansion of the section 214 program. The Corps of Engineers now has adequate experience in running the program, and recent Government Accountability Office observations concur with this assessment. Yet here we are again on the House floor moving a temporary extension of an excellent program.

Authority for this program expires on December 31 of this calendar year. If this program expires, the Corps will have to fire some regulatory personnel, reducing its ability to process permits in a timely manner.

I want to thank Representative OLSON and Representative LARSEN for their efforts on this issue. I urge all Members to vote in favor of H.R. 4165, but I do wish that we were passing a permanent, or at least a long-term, extension of the section 214 program today, not a temporary one.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. OLSON) whatever time he might consume.

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Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Arkansas, Congressman

BOOZMAN, for yielding me time; and I rise today to express my disappointment that we are only considering a 1-year extension of the section 214 language.

Section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 allows the Secretary of the Army to accept and expend funds contributed by non-Federal public entities to expedite the processing of permits through the Army Corps of Engineers. By funding additional staff to work on permanent evaluation, existing Corps staff are able to process significant backlogs more quickly. Hiring additional staff results in a reduction of permit waiting times not only for the local funding entity, but also for any individual or organization that makes an application with the Corps district.

In my district, the Harris County Flood Control District has used section 214 for the past 6 months to move forward with vital infrastructure and maintenance projects that have minimal environmental impact. According to a letter they sent my office, Harris County Flood Control District has “already noticed a significant improvement in the length of time it is taking to receive our reviews and permits that are required to proceed to construction of our projects.”

In the past 9 years, section 214 has been extended five times. Two of these extensions were for less than 1 year. This program has been hamstrung by short-term extensions that discourage both Corps districts and local public entities from participating. And today, we again add to the uncertainty of this program by extending it for 1 additional year with no guarantee of continuing it past that.

I sponsored legislation that would make section 214 authority permanent and ensure non-Federal project sponsors have the ability to move forward with vital water resources infrastructure projects and maintenance more efficiently year after year.

My bill is ready for consideration; but, instead, we are considering another short-term extension.

I will reluctantly support this 1-year extension but hope that as we move forward with the debate on the Water Resources Development Act that we can have a serious conversation about making this provision permanent. Non-Federal project sponsors need to be able to count on the longevity of section 214 in order to make the most out of it.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the gentleman from Texas, I do want to say I'm extremely sympathetic to his position, and I fully, in fact, agree with the request that we make section 214 permanent. And I, along with many others, have asked for that consideration within the context of the reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act of 2010. I am hopeful we can

work in a bipartisan approach to work with the committee's leadership to make Mr. OLSON's, as well as many others who made the same request, to make that request a reality.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, again, I do support H.R. 4165 and urge my fellow Members to vote for the bill. I appreciate Mr. LARSEN. I know that he has worked hard on this in trying to bring the issue forward and provide a permanent fix.

My hope is that in the reauthorization of WRDA that we can all, as was mentioned, work in a very bipartisan way, because this is an entity that has worked very, very well. And I think all of us agree that it really is a success story. So hopefully we can work together, he and Mr. OLSON and our leadership on the committee, so that we can provide for a permanent fix of the program, a permanent authorization, and not have to go through this every year.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support H.R. 4165, a bill to extend authority of the Secretary of the Army to accept funds from non-Federal public entities for the consideration of permits under the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbor Act of 1899.

This language is modeled after language included in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 that included a short-term extension of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, corps, section 214 permit review authority. That authority expires at the end of the current calendar year, and this legislation will continue the program through the end of December 2010.

I have been carefully monitoring the implementation of this authority. While this authority is very popular for the local public entities that have used it, we need to ensure that this authority does not affect the objectivity of the regulator.

In May 2007, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, issued a report, upon my request, which expressed concern with the overall implementation of the section 214 authority. This report recommended several improvements to increase the overall transparency and impartiality of corps' permit reviews conducted with outside funds.

Earlier this year, I requested GAO to re-evaluate whether these recommendations had been implemented by the corps. In November, the staff of the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment received a briefing by GAO that suggested additional improvements to the program were still warranted.

As a track record of implementation develops, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, committee, will have an opportunity to further review the implementation of this authority, and ensure that the corps' review of permit applications is a fair and equitable process.

The committee will further consider this issue next year during its development of the Water Resource Development Act. However, because that process will take place after the existing program authority expires, it is appropriate that we provide for an additional, short-term extension of the section 214 authority.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 4165.

Mr. BOOZMAN. With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I urge everyone to support H.R. 4165, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4165.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1992 AMENDMENT

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1854) to amend the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 to modify an environmental infrastructure project for Big Bear Lake, California.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1854

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. BIG BEAR LAKE, CALIFORNIA

Section 219(f)(84) of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 (121 Stat. 1259) is amended to read as follows:

“(84) BIG BEAR LAKE, CALIFORNIA.—\$9,000,000 for water supply infrastructure improvements for Big Bear Lake, California.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1854.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to consider H.R. 1854 to amend the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 to modify the environmental infrastructure project for Big Bear Lake, California. This bill provides technical corrections to the Big Bear Lake project, originally authorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

H.R. 1854 changes the authorized purpose of the Big Bear Lake project from wastewater treatment to water supply infrastructure. In addition, the authorized funding level is reduced by \$6 million to a \$9 million authorized funding level. We have no objections to this bill as introduced.

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1854, amending the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 to modify a project in the vicinity of Big Bear, California.

The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 was enacted in November 2007. Included in the bill is a project that authorized assistance for the city of Big Bear, California. As authorized, the bill provided \$15 million of assistance to the city to construct a wastewater treatment facility.

Since enactment, however, the city has decided against constructing the project and would instead use the authority to upgrade its water supply distribution system at a lower cost than originally authorized. The new cost of the project is \$9 million.

This project is especially critical to this region of California which is typically subjected to catastrophic wildfires. Upgrades to the water supply in the vicinity of Big Bear would increase water pressure at peak demand periods and improve water quality.

It's not often that a Member of Congress asks us to cut authorized levels of funding for their congressional district. This bill is an act of good governance and truth-in-budgeting.

I want to thank Representative LEWIS for his leadership on this issue and urge all Members to vote in favor of H.R. 1854.

Mr. LEWIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1854.

This bill will revise a previously authorized project to allow the mountain community of Big Bear, which is located in the 41st Congressional District, to move forward with the Army Corps of Engineers to begin replacement of an aging water infrastructure. The bill reduces the authorized amount of the project by \$3 million.

The city of Big Bear Lake currently distributes water through pipes that are over 70 years old and crumbling by the minute. This lack of integrity from the water infrastructure has led to declining water quality, massive water loss, and dangerously low flow levels that do not meet firefighting standards.

California is in the midst of a water crisis, and San Bernardino County has been granted Federal disaster status due to extreme drought conditions. In a misguided effort to protect fish, the Federal Government has shut off pumps for the California Aqueduct, further reducing water supplies for southern California communities. Under these severe conditions, we cannot overlook any opportunity to conserve what water we have. This bill will provide immediate and measurable conservation.

Equally dire, Big Bear is located within the San Bernardino National Forest. Because of lack of consistent management in the past, the San Bernardino National Forest has become a powder keg for wildfire. We have made some progress at reducing the threat through aggressive hazardous fuels removal, but the danger remains extreme. Replacing the water infrastructure will help protect the Big Bear community and provide the U.S. Forest Service with another vital weapon in the event of catastrophic wildfire.