

unemployment insurance extension today.

□ 1230

ELECTING A MEMBER TO CERTAIN  
STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the House Republican Conference, I send to the desk a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration by the House.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 523

*Resolved*, That the following named Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE—Mr. Jolly.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS—Mr. Jolly.

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

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

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PREVENTING GOVERNMENT  
WASTE AND PROTECTING COAL  
MINING JOBS IN AMERICA

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HASTINGS 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 the bill H.R. 2824.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 501 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. 2824.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. WOODALL) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1231

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. 2824) to amend the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 to stop the ongoing waste by the Department of the Interior of taxpayer resources and implement the final rule on excess spoil, mining waste, and buffers for perennial and intermittent streams, and for other purposes, with Mr. WOODALL in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is well-known the Obama administration has waged a long-running war on coal, which last year a White House adviser admitted "is exactly what's needed," but this is not only a war on coal. It is a war on jobs, our economy, affordable energy, small businesses, and the household budgets of American families. Already faced with higher home heating costs, middle class families will be further squeezed if the Obama administration is successful in its attempts to shut down coal production.

One of the ways the administration has carried out this war on coal is through the reckless rewrite of a coal production regulation, the 2008 Stream Buffer Zone Rule. Shortly after taking office, the Obama administration discarded the 2008 rule that went through 5 years of extensive public comment and environmental review. Since then, the administration has spent over 10 million taxpayer dollars in working to rewrite this rule, including hiring new contractors, then only to dismiss those same contractors once it was publicly revealed that the administration's proposed rewrite would cost 7,000 jobs and cause economic harm in 22 States. A report released by our House Natural Resources Committee staff in September of 2012, following years of oversight and investigations, exposed the gross mismanagement of the rule-making process, potential political interference, and widespread economic harm the proposed regulation would cause.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Inspector General, or IG, released a report with similar findings. However, what is more troubling is that the IG has identified significant ongoing problems with the rulemaking process. To make matters worse, they are refusing to disclose those problems to us here in Congress. For example, there is an entire section of the report that we have received, entitled "Issues with the New Contract," that have been almost completely blacked out. Despite our repeated requests, Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall has refused to give Congress an unredacted copy of this report. In a letter, she states that the Department of the Interior decided that it should be withheld from the committee.

The IG is charged with being an independent watchdog for Congress. It is completely unacceptable and inappropriate for the IG to be taking orders from the Interior Department, espe-

cially about what information to withhold from us here in Congress.

Mr. Chairman, I don't take what I am going to say lightly. That is why, today, I have issued a subpoena to the Department's Inspector General Kendall for this information that she has withheld from us. If the IG discovered ongoing issues with the way the Department is currently conducting this rulemaking process, they have a responsibility and a duty to share that information with Congress now. The committee is not asking the IG for materials produced by the Department, but we are asking for materials and interviews produced by the IG's staff.

The Obama administration's rule-making process has been and continues to be an unmitigated disaster. Despite having spent millions of taxpayer dollars, they have absolutely nothing to show for it and, to date, haven't even produced a draft. Meanwhile, States, industry, and America's coal miners are left in limbo, unsure of what the operating rules are on the ground. Without the 2008 rule, we are left with a rule that was put in place in 1983.

That is why we are here today—to consider H.R. 2824, the Preventing Government Waste and Protecting Coal Mining Jobs in America Act. This legislation will put an end to the years of ongoing waste and dysfunction. It will put in place a responsible process to ensure there is no rush to recklessly regulate.

First, Mr. Chairman, it stops the administration's unnecessary rewrite and implements the 2008 Stream Buffer Zone Rule that I mentioned took 5 years to put in place. It then directs the Department to responsibly study the impact of the rule for a prescribed period of time prior to initiating another new rule. This will provide certainty to the economy, to the individual States, and allow a clear examination of what may be needed and changed in the future. This bill will make certain that a new rule is written properly.

Now, some will attempt to criticize this bill for the fact that it puts in place the 2008 rule that was vacated on a very narrow technical ground by a Federal judge last month. There is really nothing new here, however, because this is the exact outcome that the administration has been seeking for over 5 years—to get rid of the 2008 rule. But let's be clear what the court ruling and, subsequently, the Department's actions really mean.

The court ruling strikes down the more protective 2008 rule and sets us back 30 years to a less restrictive 1983 rule. The 2008 rule is more modern and more protective in limiting the impacts of coal mining than the 1983 rule, but one Federal judge ruled that the 2008 rule must be set aside due to a narrow procedural technicality. This judge ruled, because the 2008 rule didn't have formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service on possible impacts to endangered species, the entire rule