It is the responsibility of this Congress to ensure that the future of NASA is one of continued progress and that space exploration remains a part of our national destiny.

NASA inspires our children to look to the stars and dream of what they too may achieve one day.

Space exploration allows us to push the bounds of our scientific knowledge, as we carry out research projects not possible within the constraints of planet Earth.

I look forward to the reintroduction of the REAL Space Act this Congress and ask that my colleagues support this important measure.

In recent years, we have seen other nations joining in the space race with varying levels of success.

We applaud these efforts, which include:

The European Space Agency's success in landing a vehicle on a comet that was speeding through deep space; and

China's landing its first rover ''Jade Rabbit'' on the surface of the moon.

Exploration of space remains critical to United States leadership and economic trendsetting position in the global economy.

The future is space, and I support NASA's continued progress to ensure the United States retains its leadership in this vital area of human exploration.

I ask that my colleagues join me in voting for H.R. 810.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the NASA Authorization bill before the House.

This legislation is important because it reaffirms Congress' commitment to space exploration and the important role NASA plays in the areas of science, aeronautics, exploration, and human spaceflight. Over the next few months, NASA spacecraft will visit Pluto and the dwarf planet Ceres for the first time. We will further develop our nation's commercial launch capability even as NASA continues work on the Orion space capsule and a new heavy-lift rocket. NASA will also build on its efforts in the important areas of space science and education. The bill before the House supports all of these endeavors.

I want to mention one NASA program in particular, the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program. This program gives students across the country the chance to design microgravity experiments to fly in Earth orbit. Indeed, one of these experiments is scheduled to come home from the International Space Station today. The experiment was designed by a team of four students from Wilkinson Middle School in Madison Heights, Michigan. The experiment involves the effects of microgravity on water purification. In Michigan, we tend to take the availability of fresh water for granted since we are surrounded by the Great Lakes, but water is a rare and precious commodity in space, and hopefully this experiment will help future astronauts to re-use water.

I want to commend the students who have worked so hard on this microgravity experiment: Regina Alsabagh, Farah Sabah, Maryam Kafra and Israa Alfadhli. Their achievement is all the more remarkable since their experiment originally was supposed to be carried into orbit last October, but that rocket exploded shortly after liftoff, destroying the students' experiment. Fortunately, NASA was able to find space on a rocket to the space station that launched in January, and the Wilkinson students managed to build a second version of their experiment in time for that flight.

I congratulate the Wilkinson students for their hard work, perseverance, and determination to overcome obstacles. It's important that Congress continue to support NASA and efforts like the Student Spaceflight Experiments Program. I urge all my colleagues to join me in voting for the NASA Authorization bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PALAZZO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 810.

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.

TSA OFFICE OF INSPECTION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2015

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 719) to require the Transportation Security Administration to conform to existing Federal law and regulations regarding criminal investigator positions, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 719

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 ''TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Consistent with Federal law and regulations, for law enforcement officers to qualify for premium pay as criminal investigators, the officers must, in general, spend on average at least 50 percent of their time investigating, apprehending, or detaining individuals suspected or convicted of offenses against the criminal laws of the United States.

(2) According to the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS IG), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) does not ensure that its cadre of criminal investigators in the Office of Inspection are meeting this requirement, even though they are considered law enforcement officers under TSA policy and receive premium pay.

(3) Instead, TSA criminal investigators in the Office of Inspection primarily monitor the results of criminal investigations conducted by other agencies, investigate administrative cases of TSA employee misconduct, and carry out inspections, covert tests, and internal reviews, which the DHS IG asserts could be performed by employees other than criminal investigators at a lower cost.

(4) The premium pay and other benefits afforded to TSA criminal investigators in the Office of Inspection who are incorrectly classified as such will cost the taxpayer as much as $17,000,000 over 5 years if TSA fails to make any changes to the number of criminal investigators in the Office of Inspection, according to the DHS IG.

(5) This may be a conservative estimate, as it accounts for the cost of Law Enforcement Availability Pay, but not the costs of law enforcement training, statutory early retirement benefits, police vehicles, and weapons.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ADMINISTRATION.—The term ''Administration'' means the Transportation Security Administration.

(2) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term ''Assistant Secretary'' means the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security) of the Department of Homeland Security.

(3) INSPECTOR GENERAL.—The term ''Inspector General'' means the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security.

SEC. 4. INSPECTOR GENERAL REVIEW.

(a) REVIEW.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Inspector General shall analyze the data and methods that the Assistant Secretary uses to identify employees of the Administration who meet the requirements of sections 8331(20), 8401(17), and 5545a of title 5, United States Code, and provide the relevant findings to the Assistant Secretary, including a finding on whether the data and methods are adequate and valid.

(b) PROHIBITION ON HIRING.—If the Inspector General finds that such data and methods are inadequate or invalid, the Administration may not hire any new employee to work in the Office of Inspection of the Administration until—

(1) the Assistant Secretary makes a certification described in section 5 to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate; and

(2) the Inspector General submits to such Committees a finding, not later than 30 days after the Assistant Secretary makes such certification, that the Assistant Secretary utilized adequate and valid data and methods to make such certification.

SEC. 5. TSA OFFICE OF INSPECTION WORKFORCE CERTIFICATION.

(a) CERTIFICATION TO CONGRESS.—The Assistant Secretary shall, by not later than 90 days after the date the Inspector General provides its findings to the Assistant Secretary under section 4(a), document and certify in writing to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate that only those employees of the Administration who meet the requirements of sections 8331(20), 8401(17), and 5545a of title 5, United States Code, are classified as criminal investigators and are receiving premium pay and other benefits associated with such classification.

(b) EMPLOYEE RECLASSIFICATION.—The Assistant Secretary shall reclassify criminal investigator positions in the Office of Inspection as noncriminal investigator positions or non-law enforcement positions if the individuals in those positions do not, or are not expected to, spend an average of at least 50 percent of their time performing criminal investigative duties.

(c) PROJECTED COST SAVINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Secretary shall estimate the total long-term cost savings to the Federal Government resulting from the implementation of subsection (b), and provide such estimate to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the

Senate by not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(2) CONTENTS.—Such estimate shall identify savings associated with the positions reclassified under subsection (b) and include, among other factors the Assistant Secretary considers appropriate, savings from—

(A) law enforcement training;

(B) early retirement benefits;

(C) law enforcement availability pay; and

(D) weapons, vehicles, and communications devices.

SEC. 6. INVESTIGATION OF FEDERAL AIR MARSHAL SERVICE MISCONDUCT.

Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, or as soon as practicable, the Assistant Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Homeland Security of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate—

(1) any materials in the possession or control of the Department of Homeland Security associated with the Office of Inspection's review of instances in which Federal Air Marshal Service officials obtained discounted or free firearms for personal use; and

(2) information on specific actions that will be taken to prevent Federal Air Marshal Service officials from using their official positions, or exploiting, in any way, the Service's relationships with private vendors to obtain discounted or free firearms for personal use.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) and the gentlewoman from New York (Miss RICE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

I rise in strong support of H.R. 719, the TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015. I introduced this bipartisan bill to target millions of dollars of potential waste within the TSA's Office of Inspection, as identified by the Homeland Security inspector general.

TSA's Office of Inspection is charged with investigating misconduct of TSA employees and conducting internal inspections and covert testing of TSA operations to ensure our transportation systems are well protected.

However, according to a critical DHS inspector general report issued in 2013, TSA does not sufficiently track whether each of its 100 criminal investigators in the Office of Inspection, in fact, spend a majority of time performing actual criminal investigations, as required by law.

Instead, these TSA investigators primarily monitor the results of criminal investigations conducted by other agencies, investigate administrative cases of employee misconduct, and carry out inspections, covert tests, and internal reviews. Therefore, these TSA investigators may be unduly receiving premium law enforcement pay, specialized training, vehicles, firearms, and other benefits even though they do not meet the minimum legal requirements for receiving such pay and benefits.

H.R. 719 aims to correct this problem by requiring the inspector general to certify that TSA criminal investigators meet the legal threshold for receiving premium pay and benefits, which could save as much as $17 million in taxpayer dollars over 5 years.

Mr. Speaker, like any entity, the vast majority of TSA employees do an exemplary job. It is a critical component of this continuing ability to have these people perform at a high level to have internal oversight.

The importance of investigating misconduct among TSA employees cannot be overstated. Just last week, we learned of an investigation conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, otherwise known as ICE, that led to the indictment of a TSA employee on child pornography charges.

In this recent and unfortunate example, it was ICE that performed the investigation, not TSA. We must ensure that TSA's internal cadre of investigators are spending the majority of time on criminal investigations or we risk wasting significant taxpayer resources, resources that could be used toward improving the integrity of TSA's workforce.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the original cosponsor of this legislation, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SANFORD), for his leadership on this important commonsense issue.

This bill passed the House last Congress, but the Senate did not take action on it. Let's send this bill back to the Senate and on to the President for his signature.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on H.R. 719, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Miss RICE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of H.R. 719, the TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015.

Mr. Speaker, as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, I have a responsibility to ensure that the Transportation Security Administration operates effectively and efficiently. Part of this responsibility includes working to ensure that not a single taxpayer dollar is wasted so that resources are properly expended to protect our Nation's airports and the traveling public.

Regrettably, we have learned from the Department of Homeland Security's inspector general that the TSA's Office of Inspection is not operating effectively and efficiently. Specifically, we have learned that taxpayer dollars have been wasted in a manner that may well be undermining the effectiveness and integrity of internal investigations and inspections within the TSA.

According to a report issued by the inspector general in September of 2013, some employees in the Office of Inspection were designated ''criminal investigators'' and have received the premium pay and early retirement benefits commensurate with that position, despite the fact that they perform little to no investigative duties.

Apparently, the Office of Inspection knowingly made these improper designations and knowingly conferred better pay and benefits to employees who did not do the work required to justify such compensation.

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If no changes are made to the number of criminal investigator positions, the inspector general estimates that it will result in the wasting of as much as $17.5 million over 5 years. H.R. 719 seeks to put an end to this wasteful practice and prevent it from happening in the future.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would require TSA to certify that all persons designated as criminal investigators are working on criminal investigations at least 50 percent of their time. If the TSA wants to provide an employee with the enhanced pay and benefits that criminal investigators receive, then they should have to certify that the employee is actually performing the duties of a criminal investigator. That is just common sense.

This measure would not affect individuals in that office who legitimately hold the criminal investigator title and would not impede efforts to thwart terror plots and other criminal enterprises that threaten our national security.

Again, this legislation is common sense. It reflects a commitment to good government and the careful stewardship of taxpayer dollars. The House unanimously approved identical legislation in the last Congress, and I urge my colleagues to do the same with this bill.

This is an opportunity for bipartisan action to solve a problem and demonstrate the strength of our commitment to eliminate wasteful spending.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to commend Chairman KATKO, as well as the gentleman from South Carolina, Representative SANFORD, for their work on this legislation. If enacted, H.R. 719 will bring greater accountability to TSA's Office of Inspection and ensure taxpayer dollars are being used efficiently and that past abuses are not being repeated.

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

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Homeland Security Chairman MCCAUL and Ranking Member THOMPSON for their support of this bill, as well as the ranking member of the Subcommittee

on Transportation Security, the gentlewoman from New York (Miss RICE).

Mr. Speaker, the American people have entrusted us with conducting oversight of the agencies like TSA to root out instances of waste. H.R. 719 will hold TSA accountable and save precious tax dollars by ensuring that the inspector general's findings are addressed.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 719, the "TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015".

Upon its creation, TSA was given broad authority to hire, fire, and set the terms of employment of its personnel.

This has resulted in employees, such as Transportation Security Officers, lacking the full rights afforded other Federal employees.

It has also resulted, in some cases, of abuses of the system for the gain of a few.

According to the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security, TSA's Office of Inspection has been gaming the system by employing a bloated number of personnel as "criminal investigators" for years.

Those who are designated as "criminal investigators" receive additional compensation and are afforded the right to retire early.

H.R. 719 will put an end to these abuses by requiring the Inspector General to approve the method used by TSA to designate personnel as criminal investigators. It also requires TSA to certify to Congress that only those individuals performing the requisite criminal investigation work are designated as "criminal investigators".

According to the Inspector General, properly classifying individuals within TSA's Office of Inspection could save taxpayers as much as $17 million over five years.

During Committee consideration of this measure last Congress, I offered an amendment on behalf of Representative LORETTA SANCHEZ that addresses revelations about how some within TSA's Federal Air Marshal Service exploited relationships with private vendors to obtain discounted or free firearms.

Specifically, in April 2014, the Committee became aware that the former director of the Federal Air Marshal Service bought several guns from an employee who is under investigation for using his position to obtain free and discounted firearms.

Unfortunately, TSA was less than forthcoming with Congress regarding this investigation, leaving many questions unanswered about how the investigation was conducted and the number of FAMs officials involved.

The exploitation of official relationships for personal gain is a serious matter.

Such misuse occurring within the Federal Air Marshal Service, the Law Enforcement component within TSA is unacceptable.

To address the lack of transparency regarding the investigation, the Committee accepted language I offered to require TSA to provide information and materials associated with the Office of Inspection's review of the allegations to Congress.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as a senior member of the Homeland Security Committee and a former chair of the Transportation Security Subcommittee, I rise in support of H.R. 719, the "TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015."

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman MCCAUL and Ranking Member THOMPSON for their leadership in bringing this legislation to the floor.

H.R. 719 will save the taxpayers hundreds of thousands dollars annually by requiring the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to conform its personnel classification practices to existing Federal law and regulations regarding criminal investigator positions.

According to a report by the Homeland Security Department's Inspector General (IG), about half of the employees in the Office of Inspection (OII) are classified as criminal investigators even though their duties do not involve responsibilities that can be characterized as criminal investigation activities.

Instead, the responsibilities of these employees primarily consist of administrative duties such as investigating cases of TSA employee misconduct and conducting internal reviews.

Classifying these employees as "law enforcement" personnel, however, makes them eligible for premium pay and other significant economic benefits.

If TSA fails to reclassify criminal investigator positions as noncriminal investigator positions or non-law-enforcement positions, this will cost taxpayers as much as $17,000,000 over 5 years.

This money could be utilized to ensure that law enforcement agencies, which identify, apprehend, and prosecute criminals, have the tools, resources, and training necessary to do their job efficiently, effectively, and economically.

Mr. Speaker, I have always strongly supported providing the resources needed by law enforcement and first responders and will continue to do so in future.

But we have an obligation to the American people to be responsible stewards of the public trust and it is not responsible to provide premium pay and benefits intended for law enforcement personnel to employees who do not perform the dangerous duties of law enforcement officers.

This bill will obligate the Assistant Secretary of TSA to reclassify criminal investigator positions in the Office of Inspection as noncriminal investigator positions or non-law enforcement positions if the individuals in those positions do not, or are not expected to, spend an average of at least 50 percent of their time performing criminal investigative duties.

This is an important step to bring transparency to the office of inspector with regards to the work of TSA personnel and law enforcement investigative task.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 719, which directs the Office of Inspection to reclassify its current criminal investigator positions to conform to the requirements of applicable law and save the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Mr. MCCAUL. Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of H.R. 719, the TSA Office of Inspection Accountability Act of 2015, sponsored by the gentleman from New York, Mr. KATKO.

This bill would increase accountability at TSA and save precious taxpayer dollars by requiring the agency to correctly designate criminal investigators within the TSA Office of Inspection who are charged with conducting covert tests, inspections, and investigating misconduct among fellow TSA employees.

This bill stems from a 2013 DHS Inspector General (IG) report that found TSA's Office of Inspection does not operate efficiently and does not ensure that its criminal investigators are spending the majority of their time conducting criminal investigations, even though they are receiving premium law enforcement pay and related benefits. The bill addresses the IG's findings by requiring a thorough review of the type of work carried out by TSA criminal investigators, which could save millions of taxpayer dollars over the next several years in law enforcement pay, vehicles, training, and other benefits.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this common sense, bipartisan bill, and would like to thank the chairman of the subcommittee, Mr. KATKO, as well as the Congressman from South Carolina, Mr. SANFORD, for their leadership on this issue. I would also like to thank the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. THOMPSON, and the ranking member of the subcommittee, Miss RICE, for their support of this legislation.

H.R. 719 is substantively identical to H.R. 4803, legislation approved by the Committee on Homeland Security last Congress that subsequently passed the House by voice vote.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 719.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. KATKO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 719.

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. KATKO. 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, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GERARDO HERNANDEZ AIRPORT SECURITY ACT OF 2015

Mr. KATKO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 720) to improve intergovernmental planning for and communication during security incidents at domestic airports, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 720

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 "Gerardo Hernandez Airport Security Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The term "Assistant Secretary" means the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security) of the Department of Homeland Security.

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—The term "Administration" means the Transportation Security Administration.