

science education to classrooms across America.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for and support this important measure, H. Con. Res. 95.

Mr. COURTNEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this resolution is a sentiment that is hard to dispute or argue, but, unfortunately, it is just that, a resolution that really, beyond sort of expressing a goal, an aspirational goal, doesn't move the ball forward in terms of actually implementing what I think this resolution seeks to do, which is to make sure that school districts—every school district—particularly those with low-income kids from urban areas and rural parts of the country, have the resources which the Every Student Succeeds Act signed into law 2 years ago and laid a pathway out for us to achieve, but, unfortunately, because of the funding levels that have not come close to the authorized levels, we are falling short.

I couldn't agree more with the speakers, the proponents of this, that what is at stake here, really, I think, pervades almost every priority and every sector of our country's economy and our national policy.

In 1958, when the Russians fired Sputnik, then-President Dwight Eisenhower stepped forward and advocated the National Defense Education Act because he recognized that, from a national security standpoint, having a national policy to make sure that there are adequate resources out there for our Nation was really central to our national defense. That triggered, again, a revolution in American education, whether at the higher education level or even at the elementary level; and following that lead in 1965, we passed the ESEA Act, which funded, for the first time, title 1 that gave resources to low-income districts.

That commitment has deteriorated. It has deteriorated over the last 6 years with budgets that have underfunded this program. If you really took title 1 in terms of the full measure of eligibility for low-income students and school districts, we are funding it at about half of what the real need is out there for those types of school districts.

So, again, hopefully maybe this resolution will be an awakening for people in this Chamber, particularly as we are on the verge of taking up the 2018 budget, that funding education is as important to our economy and is as important to our national defense, frankly, as any other part of the Federal budget, because that gives us the tools to succeed as a nation, not just in 2018, but in many years forward.

So, again, I certainly am friends with some of the sponsors of this resolution. I salute the sentiment that was offered when this was introduced just a week or so ago, but, frankly, it falls short of the true commitment that we need to make as a Congress to fund and give

the resources to make sure that this aspirational goal is achieved.

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

Mr. ESTES of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remainder of my time.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the Education and the Workforce Committee, we try to endeavor to look at how do we prepare students and young adults for their career and look at ways to prepare them not just from starting with an engineering degree or a technical degree at college, but actually making sure that in their K-12 education they are better prepared as well.

As an engineer, I saw this firsthand how my education through high school and into college helped prepare me for the career that I had in the private sector before I went into the public service role. We see this continuously with the importance of having a trained workforce ready to work in our industries.

In my district, Wichita is known as the Air Capital of the World, and the one thing that I hear over and over again from aerospace companies is there is a shortage of trained, skilled workforce ready to work.

STEM education plays such a critical role in terms of how we educate and prepare the next generation of America's workforce, and so we need to encourage public and private partnerships in order to increase computer science education in K-12 classrooms. It is just a commonsense solution to try to increase STEM education in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H. Con. Res. 95, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HULTGREN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. ESTES) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 95, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### KEEP AMERICA'S REFUGES OPERATIONAL ACT

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3979) to amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to reauthorize the volunteer services, community partnership, and refuge education programs of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3979

*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 "Keep America's Refuges Operational Act".*

#### SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM VOLUNTEER SERVICES, COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP, AND REFUGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

*Section 7 of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742f) is amended in subsection (g), by striking "2011 through 2014" and inserting "2018 through 2022".*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) and the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HANABUSA) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3979, the Keep America's Refuges Operational Act, reauthorizes the National Wildlife Refuge System volunteer, community partnership, and education programs for fiscal years 2018 through 2022.

I am proud to have joined with my good friend from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES) to support conservation efforts at our Nation's wildlife refuges in a way that is also fiscally responsible.

Each year the refuge system's volunteer, community partnership, and education programs facilitate more than 1.4 million hours of service from more than 40,000 volunteers in support of our Nation's wildlife refuge system. The valuable contributions of these volunteers help maintain our Nation's 566 refuges, 14 of which I am proud to say are in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

These programs help ensure that Americans can visit, explore, fish, hunt, and study wildlife for generations to come. As a kid, I spent most of my time outdoors, and today, I still frequently visit the Rappahannock River Wildlife Refuge in my district. I have long appreciated the value of nature and wildlife in our society as well as the importance of environmental stewardship.

Volunteers perform a wide variety of tasks to assist with our refuge operations. Examples of these tasks include habitat improvement projects, laboratory research assistance, leading refuge tours, conducting fish and wildlife population surveys, and much more. All of these tasks help the Fish and Wildlife Service more efficiently fulfill its mission while also providing an opportunity for individuals and groups to contribute to the preservation and protection of our Nation's wildlife and public lands.

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H.R. 3979 reauthorizes the cost-efficient resource that helps the U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service fulfill its mission to protect and preserve the Nation's fish and wildlife. These volunteer programs are very popular with folks throughout the country, with more applicants than available volunteer slots.

This legislation has broad support from several recreational and conservation organizations, as well as bipartisan support across the Congress.

I thank Chairman BISHOP for moving this legislation and, again, extend my great appreciation to Mr. JEFFRIES for sponsoring this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of the measure, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES).

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HANABUSA) for yielding, as well as for her leadership. I also thank Chairman BISHOP for his leadership in helping to move this legislation forward.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3979, the Keep America's Refuges Operational Act, a bipartisan bill that will reauthorize the volunteer, community partnership, and education program for our National Wildlife Refuge System.

Let me begin by thanking my good friend, the distinguished gentleman from the Commonwealth of Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN), who has partnered with me on this legislation and is a strong champion for our country's refuges.

This commonsense, bipartisan legislation will support conservation efforts at our Nation's refuges in a way that saves taxpayers dollars and stimulates jobs and economic opportunity.

Our National Wildlife Refuge System is comprised of 566 refuges located in every U.S. State and territory. Refuges make up over 800 million acres of habitat dedicated to the conservation of fish and wildlife.

Each year, 47 million Americans visit refuges, which help to support local economies by generating over \$2 billion in revenue and more than 35,000 local jobs. People visit refuges from all over the country to explore, hunt, fish, and experience America's natural beauty.

Refuges also help to mold the next generation of conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts by providing learning experiences and cherished memories for America's families. Refuges have a tremendous impact for communities all over America, even in my hometown of Brooklyn, New York.

But this wouldn't be possible without help from dedicated volunteers, who donate 20 percent of the total service work at our refuges. They support full-time staff by helping to operate visitor centers; conduct fish and wildlife population surveys; maintain visitor structures, roads, and paths; fight invasive species; and protect native plants and animals.

While volunteers may vary in age, background, and skill set, what they

all have in common is their dedication to preserving our country's natural beauty so that we can all enjoy it for years to come.

Advancing this legislation has been a collaborative process, and I greatly appreciate the hard work of Mr. WITTMAN and Members on both sides of the aisle. Through this bipartisan legislation, we will demonstrate the economic benefits to be gained from protecting America's natural beauty and being good stewards of the environment God has given to us all.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support H.R. 3979.

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. HANABUSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the passage of H.R. 3979 extends the authorization of volunteer and educational programs on the National Wildlife Refuge System administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

This bill highlights the importance of community partnerships and volunteers and the value they bring to our public lands. In 2016, refuge volunteers donated 1.3 million hours, which equals \$30.6 million of labor value.

Volunteers are critical for the daily operation of the National Wildlife Refuge System and other Federal lands. I know, in many cases, visitors would not have access to these unique places without the participation of volunteers and other partners.

I serve as ranking member of the Federal Lands Subcommittee, where we held a hearing on this bill in November and heard testimony from the National Wildlife Refuge Association about the importance of sustaining the volunteer program. I am pleased we can work in a bipartisan fashion to move this important message through the House.

I commend the sponsor, Representative JEFFRIES of New York, for his hard work and dedication to this issue. This is a good bill, and I urge my colleagues to support its adoption.

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

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I echo the sentiment of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. This truly is what makes our Nation great: individuals willing to give of their time to work on these refuges.

Many times, the ability to access those refuges is dependent upon those volunteers. We take a few resources and stretch them across the Nation on many of these refuge lands, and it is our volunteers who, many times, help in maintaining these lands and making sure that there is access and making sure that people who come to visit understand the true value and nature of the resources that are there.

It is, truly, I think, a great example of what makes our country great: people willing to put their time and effort

into these refuges and making sure they, indeed, can be enjoyed by all. This is why I think this bill enjoys the support of folks on both sides of the aisle. This truly is, I think, an issue that should bring us all together.

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 Virginia (Mr. WITTMAN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3979, as amended.

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. WITTMAN. 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.

#### UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION, AFG, AND SAFER PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2017

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4661) to reauthorize the United States Fire Administration, the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program, the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants program, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant program, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4661

*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 "United States Fire Administration, AFG, and SAFER Program Reauthorization Act of 2017".

#### SEC. 2. REAUTHORIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES FIRE ADMINISTRATION.

Section 17(g)(1)(M) of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2216 (g)(1)(M)) is amended—

(1) by striking "fiscal year 2017" and inserting "for each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023"; and

(2) by inserting "for each such fiscal year" after "\$2,753,672".

#### SEC. 3. REAUTHORIZATION OF ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANTS PROGRAM AND THE FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY GRANTS PROGRAM.

(a) SUNSET.—Section 33(r) of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229(r)) is amended by striking "the date that is 5 years after the date of the enactment of the Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2012" and inserting "September 30, 2024".

(b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section 33(q)(1)(B) of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229(q)(1)(B)) is amended, in the matter preceding clause (i), by striking "2017" and inserting "2023".

(c) AUTHORIZATION FOR CERTAIN TRAINING UNDER ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANTS