

Mrs. BENTLEY. Mr. Speaker, I would request that the gentleman withdraw his request at this time so that we may verify if the Republican side had agreed on that.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw my request at this time.

OVERSEAS FOREIGN VESSEL INSPECTION ACT

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4485) to authorize reimbursement of expenses for overseas inspections and examination of foreign vessels.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4485

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That section 3317(b) of title 46, United States Code is amended—

(1) by striking "chapter" and substituting "part"; and

(2) by inserting "or a foreign vessel" after "documented vessel".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. TAUZIN] will be recognized for 20 minutes, and the gentleman from Maryland [Mrs. BENTLEY] will be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. TAUZIN].

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4485, the Overseas Foreign Vessel Inspection Act introduced by Hon. WALTER B. JONES, of North Carolina and the chairman of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. The purpose of this legislation is to insure that the Coast Guard may conduct certain safety inspections of foreign vessels in foreign countries and may be reimbursed for expenses incurred in connection with inspections of vessels in foreign countries.

Currently, the Coast Guard inspects foreign vessels on their initial arrival in a U.S. port to insure full compliance with all applicable U.S. laws and regulations. If a vessel undergoes reconstruction or repair in a foreign port, it must also undergo certain reinspections. Obviously, if the Coast Guard can conduct its inspection of a vessel while it is in dry dock, it can do a more thorough job than if the vessel is afloat. Under current law, the Coast Guard may be reimbursed for its travel expenses in connection with an inspection of a U.S.-flag vessel, even if the vessel is in a foreign country. This will make the law consistent for foreign flag vessels. The practical impact is to insure more accurate inspections of all vessels while saving the taxpayers money.

Let me make it clear that this legislation in no way authorizes or encourages foreign construction or repair of vessels. However, for the sake of the safety of thousands of passengers on

these foreign vessels, we must insure the most careful and thorough inspections possible. In that regard, this legislation is very simple and straightforward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my chairman, Mr. JONES of North Carolina for his leadership on this issue. Mr. JONES of North Carolina as chairman of this committee has been in the forefront on issues relating to passenger vessel safety standards. I believe that his initiatives as chairman will mean that passengers on cruise ships will have greater confidence in the Coast Guard's ability to determine the safety of each vessel involved.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4485, a bill to allow the U.S. Coast Guard to seek reimbursement for the examination and inspection of a foreign-flag vessel outside the United States.

Under current law, an owner of a U.S.-flag vessel who requests the Coast Guard to inspect a ship in a foreign location is required to reimburse the Coast Guard for the cost of travel, lodging, meals, and certain incidentals. These costs do not include, however, inspector salaries or overtime pay.

Mr. Speaker, with the passage of H.R. 4485, we will simply extend this reimbursement authority to foreign-flag ships inspected by the Coast Guard at a foreign port. By so doing, the Coast Guard will recover some of its travel expenses and, more importantly, it will ensure the safety of these vessels.

Based upon conversations with the Coast Guard, it appears that an overseas inspection of most vessels, including passenger cruise ships and tankers, are often more thorough than those in the United States because the vessels are frequently in a dry dock or shipyard facility. Under these conditions, the Coast Guard can more easily identify problems or construction flaws and can recommend modifications to the vessel owner on how the ship can comply with the International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea and all other U.S. safety laws. By correcting these problems at an early stage, the owner of the vessel will save a great deal of time and money by eliminating the costly delays that usually occur when a vessel is first inspected in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4485 is a bipartisan, noncontroversial piece of legislation which should be supported by every Member of the House of Representatives. It will improve safety, it will not cost any taxpayer money, it will help the U.S. Coast Guard, and it is strongly supported by both the administration and all elements of the U.S. maritime industry.

Mr. Speaker, I too want to go on record as thanking the chairman of the committee and the ranking members, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. DAVIS] and the gentleman from New York [Mr. LENT] for their work on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of H.R. 4485.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, today, we consider, under suspension of the rules, H.R. 4485, a bill that would enhance the safety of foreign vessels entering our waters.

My bill would allow the Coast Guard to inspect and examine a foreign vessel overseas when requested to do so by the vessel owner or operator, provided the Coast Guard is reimbursed for travel and subsistence costs. This authority currently exists for U.S.-flag vessels.

The Coast Guard examines foreign vessels when they arrive in the United States for compliance with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, other international conventions, and applicable U.S. laws. Vessels are also inspected after a rehabilitation, rebuilding, or significant modification.

Allowing the Coast Guard to inspect vessels while dry-docked would ensure a more thorough inspection; certainly, it would promote safety; and despite the fact that owners would pay for the privilege, it should save time and money.

The bill is supported by the Coast Guard and vessel owners, and, particularly important in these difficult times, it would pay for itself.

Mrs. BENTLEY. Mr. Speaker, I have no requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Maryland for her comments.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MAZZOLI). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. TAUZIN] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4485.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members who wish to do so may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 4485, the bill just passed.

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

There was no objection.

NATIONAL UNDERSEA RESEARCH PROGRAM ACT OF 1992

Mr. HUGHES. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill