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Hensarling: Short-Term Reauthorization of NFIP is Déjà vu All Over Again

Washington, Jul 24 -

Financial Services Committee Chairman Jeb Hensarling (R-TX) [delivered](#) the following speech on the House floor today during debate on a bill to extend the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) without any reforms to the program:

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to do something I do not often do, and that is I have asked my leadership to put a bill on the floor that I do not support. I'm talking about the bill that would provide for a non-reform re-authorization of the National Flood Insurance Program through the end of November.

I want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, I believe this program needs to be re-authorized, and the House has done its work. The House passed a bill with reforms last November.

Never underestimate the Senate's capacity to do nothing, and unfortunately the Senate has done nothing. But this is a program, Mr. Speaker, that continues to be in dire need of reform.

And now we have re-authorized it without reforms not once, not twice, not three times, not four times, not five times – six times since the Financial Services Committee first reported this bill out. Enough is enough.

Mr. Speaker, we lost in America 116 lives last year to flooding. Billions and billions of dollars of property loss, and yet, we have a program unreformed that incents people to live in harm – incents people to live in harm's way. We should not do this, Mr. Speaker.

I went and I visited those who survived hurricane Harvey. People that were close to your district, people whose homes have flooded three times in the last eight years, and I heard harrowing tales of survival. And yet we have a program that says, “you know what, we will help you rebuild your same home in the same fashion in the same place... hope you survive next time.” That's wrong. That's just wrong, Mr. Speaker.

And, yes, we need more mitigation money, we need better flood control projects, and the House bill had more flood mitigation money than any other reform bill.

But this bill before us has no reforms.

This is a program that the taxpayer has subsidized, so far, by \$40 billion. Some of the debt has been forgiven, but it runs a billion and a half dollar deficit every single year, Mr. Speaker. It is unsustainable – the Congressional Budget Office says it, the GAO says it, OMB says it – it is an unsustainable program. The finances do not work.

And then last but not least, Mr. Speaker, it is a government monopoly. It's a government monopoly when people could, through a competitive marketplace, actually get more affordable, flood insurance. And that's just not a theory, that's happening as we speak. In the small little bit of the marketplace that is open to competition, people are saving hundreds, if not thousands of dollars in places like Pennsylvania and in places like Florida. We had testimony in our committee, and so it's just rather disappointing that again we face the seventh time, the seventh

time of not reforming a program that has no market competition, that is fiscally unsustainable, and yet we continue to see premiums skyrocket in the government monopoly.

I do want to thank the gentleman from California, Mr. Royce, and the gentleman on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Blumenauer from Oregon. They tried to put together a reform package with the most minimal, minimal level of reforms, and unfortunately it did not appear to carry the day.

So now, I suspect we will soon cast, with an overwhelming vote, a clean re-authorization, but I don't think they're going to take it up in the Senate. Maybe I'm wrong, in which case we will have to deal with this. And I would just simply again ask, particularly for the people on my side of the aisle-- I think it helps maybe once or twice a month we ask ourselves Ronald Reagan's eternal question – "If not us, who? If not now, when?" I invite somebody to answer that question for me.