

As the Speaker knows, we have had very little opportunity for deliberation and debate of this issue in the current Congress, over the objections of a fair number of people who really believe strongly that the American people deserve and in fact are requesting that Congress deal with this matter.

One of the bills that has been presented of the many bills that are before this Congress that could be debated and deliberated and voted upon this session, if the Republican leadership so desired, is the clean money, clean elections bill which I was proud to sponsor, H.R. 2199.

I would like to take a little bit of this time to explain some of the concepts in this bill so people will understand just what one of the proposals is that could be dealt with in this particular session.

The clean money, clean elections bill would have a privately funded candidate, if so desired, and a publicly funded candidate. That would be the option.

If you are a clean money candidate, or the publicly funded candidate, then the campaign would start six months before your primary date. That is when the effort would begin.

Anything before then would only be an opportunity to collect seed money, so-to-speak, just \$35,000 or less in contributions of \$100 or less to fund the operation of an office and a campaign staff to help you get your grassroots organization to get together. There would be no money involved in that small seed amount for TV or radio or other advertising.

From that period of six months prior to the primary date onward up until the thirtieth day before the election, one month before the election, candidates would seek to qualify these public funded candidates by collecting a set number of \$5 contributions from individual residents of the state.

Once that amount was received and you were qualified for the primary, if in fact you won the primary, you would be qualified for the final. The total amount you could receive as a clean money candidate for the primary and the general election would be 80 percent of the national average of campaign expenditures by all winning House candidates for the previous three election cycles. That amount would be limited and set. In addition, if you opted to be a publicly funded candidate, you would receive TV and radio time free, and that would be compensation to the broadcast companies for the spectrum that they already receive from the American public.

This should be a strong incentive for people to forego the private money chase, to become a member of this system of clean money financing.

Soft money would be prohibited. And, yes, if you elect to have private funding, you can certainly go about and raise as much as you want, but there are strong disincentives for you not to do that.

Issues campaigns run for a private money candidate against a clean money candidate would count toward the private money candidate's sum. If they surpassed the limits allowed in the campaign, the clean money candidate would get offsetting moneys, so that this would always be an evenly balanced campaign.

The five objectives that are basically addressed in this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, are as follows: It would eliminate any perceived and real conflicts of interest caused by the direct financing of campaigns by private interests; it would limit campaign spending by requiring that candidates who choose to participate in the clean money system spend no more money than the fixed amount of funding that they receive; it allows qualified individuals to run for office, regardless of their economic status or their access to large contributors; it frees candidates and elected officials from the burden of the continuous money chase; last, it would shorten the effective length of campaigns by defining the point at which candidates receive clean money financing to pay for campaign expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, this bill creates a voluntary system. Candidates may choose to rely upon private financing, though the system provides strong incentives not to do that. For candidates, it also gets rid of the system of disfavored soft money.

It creates a level playing field. There would be no unilateral disarming of any party. In effect, Mr. Speaker, I find that is generally the complaint of one side of this House or another, that many of the campaign finance bills would disarm unilaterally one faction against the other. That is not the case with this bill. It sets an even, level playing field, so the candidate with the message, with the ability to organize, get their message out, put together a strong grassroots campaign, would be the candidate that would get the voters' attention.

It is, I think, Mr. Speaker, a fact that best organized candidates would prevail, and voters would in fact prevail. They would own back their own electoral process and they would once again have faith and the system would have credibility.

Mr. Speaker, I put that out there as one of the options that are available for people as they wonder why it is that this House under the Republican leadership has not dealt with the issue of campaign finance reform.

I say there are a number of other credible bills up for consideration that deserve a chance to be debated, deserve the deliberation of this great body, and deserve to come to a vote in a meaningful way.

I would urge the Republican leadership to put this matter on the floor of the House before we go home for recess this fall, and I hope that other Members who have presented their bills will take the opportunity to address to the public the substance of their bills so

that we can in some fashion have a debate that I think is much deserved and long overdue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington [Mrs. LINDA SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. LINDA SMITH of Washington addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii [Mr. ABERCROMBIE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. ABERCROMBIE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

PERSIAN GULF WAR SYNDROME STILL A MYSTERY AFTER 6 YEARS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Vermont [Mr. SANDERS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I want to address one of the most important issues facing American veterans and one of the great medical dilemmas facing our entire country, and that is that over 70,000 veterans of the Persian Gulf war, including hundreds in my own State of Vermont, continue to suffer from gulf war illness, and 6 years, 6 years after the completion of that war, there is still no understanding of the cause of that illness and no effective treatment for it.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS], who is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Human Resources, has held 10 hearings on gulf war illness since March, 1996. As a member of that committee, I cannot begin to express the frustration that many of us feel regarding the ineptitude of the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration in responding adequately and effectively to the needs of those veterans who continue to hurt.

Pure and simple, the bottom line is that 6 years after the end of the Persian Gulf war, the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration still have not developed an understanding of the cause of gulf war illness or an effective treatment protocol. In fact, their record has been so inadequate that several weeks ago the Presidential Advisory Committee on Persian Gulf War Veterans Illnesses indicated that it will be recommending to the President that an independent agency outside of the Pentagon take responsibility for investigating the health effects of low level chemical and biological weapons exposure.

According to Arthur L. Kaplan, a bioethics professor at the University of

Pennsylvania, and a member of that panel, "The Pentagon is not credible to continue inquiries that veterans and the public do not find persuasive."

The New York Times writes in discussing that issue:

A special White House panel said today that the Pentagon had lost so much credibility in its investigation of the release of Iraqi chemical weapons in the 1991 Persian Gulf War that oversight of the investigation must be taken away from the Defense Department permanently.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to inform my colleagues that there is language in the committee report of Labor-HHS, which passed the House today, language which I introduced, which funds an independent, scientific research program, into how chemical exposures in the Persian Gulf relate to the illnesses suffered by 70,000 of our veterans.

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This research program is to be implemented through the Secretary of Health, with the National Institute of Environmental Health Science as the lead agency. The committee has agreed to appropriate \$1.1 million for next year and \$7 million over a 5-year period.

What is important here, and it is very important, is that for the first time a governmental agency outside of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs is going to take a hard look at the role that chemicals may have played in causing gulf war illness. This is a major breakthrough, and we have to continue in that effort.

This report language is strongly supported by the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the National Gulf War Resource Center. Veterans and Americans all over this country are, to say the least, less than impressed about the role that DOD and VA have played in this entire process from the very end of the war until today.

Mr. Speaker, the military theater in the Persian Gulf was a chemical cesspool. Our troops were exposed to chemical warfare agents, leaded petroleum, widespread use of pesticides, depleted uranium, and burning oil wells. In addition, they were given a myriad of pharmaceuticals as vaccines.

Further, and perhaps most importantly, as a result of a waiver from the FDA, hundreds of thousands of our troops were given pyridostigmine bromide, which was being used as an antinerve gas agent, had never been used in this capacity before. Under an agreement between the DOD and the FDA in regards to this waiver, the DOD was required to collect data on any use of pyridostigmine bromide. However, they failed to do that.

Mr. Speaker, we are beginning to make some progress by going outside of the DOD and the VA. It is a breakthrough. We have to continue in that direction in order to address this enormously serious problem.

For 5 years, the Pentagon denied that our soldiers had been exposed to any chemical warfare agents. Finally, after being forced to admit that there were exposures, they suggested that the exposures were "limited". The DOD's first estimates were 400 troops exposed, then 20,000 troops. In July of this year, the DOD and DIA gave us their best estimate—that as many as 98,910 American troops could have been exposed to chemical warfare agents due to destruction of "the Pit" in Khamisyah, an Iraqi munitions facility. Mr. Chairman, I would not be surprised if this estimate is revised upward in the not too distant future, as more information is gathered regarding other incidents of chemical warfare exposure.

Mr. Speaker, an increasing number of scientists now believe that the synergistic effect of chemical exposures, plus the investigational vaccine pyridostigmine bromide, may well be a major cause of the health problems affecting our soldiers:

Dr. Robert W. Haley of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center concludes that the gulf war syndromes are caused by low level chemical nerve agents combined with other chemicals, including pyridostigmine bromide. Doctors Mohammed Abou-Donia and Tom Kurt, of Duke University Medical Center, in studies using hens, found that a combination of two pesticides used in the gulf war, in combination with pyridostigmine bromide causes neurological deficits in test animals, similar to those reported by some gulf war veterans. Doctors Garth and Nancy Nicolson have completed research which concludes that gulf war veterans' illnesses may be due to combinations of chemical exposures in the Persian Gulf. Dr. Claudia Miller reports that there are similarities between the gulf war veterans' symptoms and those of some civilians exposed to organophosphate pesticides, carbamate pesticides, or low levels of volatile organic chemical mixtures. Dr. William Rea concludes that neurotoxic environmental exposures and other personal exposures prior to and during deployment in the gulf may have resulted in chronically deregulated immune and nonimmune detoxification systems, resulting in multi-symptom illness. In addition, a number of these scientists and physicians have devised treatment protocols for gulf war illnesses and some are reporting success in their treatments. These are the types of research programs and treatment protocols which our Government should be aggressively pursuing for the sake of our veterans, and what I hope will be accelerated as a result of this language.

The National Institute of Environmental Health is eager and ready to begin research and to provide its results to Congress in an expedient manner. This research program will address three areas of which are necessary to better understand the nature of the problem. These are: First, capitalizing on the existing body of knowledge of a similar disorder called multiple chemical sensitivity, second, defining individual genetic differences in the ability to metabolize environmental agents commonly encountered during Desert Storm, and third, developing a better understanding of how multiple exposures interact to exert their toxicity on an organism. Moreover, the research program is to include an investigation of treatment protocols which are being developed in the public and private sectors for illnesses re-

sulting from chemical and other environmental exposures.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. MEEHAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. MEEHAN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

SECRETARY OF THE ARMY'S SENIOR REVIEW PANEL ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, a number of women members of the women's caucus may be coming to the floor this afternoon to make speeches concerning the report of the Secretary of the Army's Senior Review Panel on Sexual Harassment.

The reason women Members of the House would speak to this subject relates to the fact that sexual harassment in the Armed Forces was the first issue of the 105th Congress to come to the attention of the women's caucus. We did not choose it; it chose us. We came back to find a full-blown scandal. This time it was not Tailhook and the Navy, it was Aberdeen and the Army, and it looked like a far more serious scandal than the Tailhook scandal.

We had a meeting with the Secretary of the Army. We have followed this issue, met with officials. Some of our Members have given very special attention to it. We have sought remedies, we have monitored this issue, and now a report comes through.

Mr. Speaker, what is important to note about this report is the absence of equivocation. The findings of the report are nothing short of refreshing, and the Secretary of the Army, Mr. Togo West, deserves our compliments for sending forth a panel to do a job, frank and full, so that the Armed Forces of the United States would not be disgraced by continuing allegations of sexual harassment.

Examples of findings that are bold and unequivocal are, and I am quoting: "The Army lacks institutional commitment to the EO Program. Examples: Sexual harassment exists throughout the Army, crossing gender, rank and racial lines." Pretty stark, pretty frank, and the kind of straight talk that will pierce the ranks up and down. That is what we need if we want to get rid of this stuff.

The panel said, "We are firmly convinced that leadership is the fundamental issue." That is indeed refreshing. At Aberdeen we saw that there were drill sergeants and others of lower rank who were prosecuted and sanctioned. Only now are we seeing that at Aberdeen some of the upper ranks have also been sanctioned. Unless that happens,