

as well as applying these lessons learned from the Persian Gulf experience to assist veterans who may deploy in future conflicts.

As my colleagues have mentioned before me, this legislation would authorize the VA to provide priority health care to treat illnesses that may be attributable to a veteran's service in combat during any period of war after the Vietnam War or during any other future period of hostilities.

This legislation would require the VA to establish a multi-disciplinary National Center for the Study of War-Related Illnesses to carry out and foster research, education and improved clinical care of war-related illnesses.

This bill contains many requirements for accountability and openness, so I have chosen to address only a few. I fully support all provisions of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Chairman STUMP of the full Committee, Mr. EVANS, the Ranking Minority Member, Chairman STEARNS of the Subcommittee on Health, and Mr. GUTIERREZ, the Subcommittee's Ranking Minority Member, for their hard work and bipartisan approach on the bill. I am pleased to join them in cosponsoring the bill.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, when we send American troops into the hostile physical and military environment of war and they come back wounded or ill, we need to do all we can to heal the wounds of war. I urge all of my colleagues to approve this bill.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in strong support of H.R. 3980, the Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Care and Research Act.

H.R. 3980 establishes priority VA health care enrollment to treat illnesses that may have been caused by a veterans service in any combat period after the Vietnam war or for any future combat service. This treatment will be available for five years after a veterans discharge from service.

This legislation also directs the VA to establish a multi-disciplinary center to support research, education and improved treatment of war-related illnesses. Furthermore, the VA must establish a joint research project with the national academy of sciences to study the efficacy of treatments given to Gulf war veterans for possible service-connected illness. Finally, the emphasis of public input on gulf war illness efforts is increased.

Mr. Speaker, in my view this legislation is long overdue. As we all know, the track record of the Department of Defense and the Pentagon regarding Gulf War illness research is sorely lacking. For years, the VA was all too happy to accept the overly optimistic findings of DOD that no veterans had been exposed to toxic chemicals or other materials. Consequently, research on Gulf-war illness did not truly begin until 1995, four years after the war ended.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, this research effort has been slow to get off the ground and lacks, a uniform approach. The General Accounting Office has been sharply critical of the VA research efforts, and the VA has chosen to contest GAO findings, rather than adopt more of them.

In the interim, our Gulf-war veterans, have not been getting any healthier, their symptoms are real, they are debilitating, and they are most definitely not products of the veterans' imaginations, I hope that this legislation will continue to make their lives, and their coping with their symptoms, a somewhat easier.

According, I urge my colleagues to support this worthwhile legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. STUMP) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3980, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### AUTHORIZING ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO CHIEF JUSTICE TO ACCEPT VOLUNTARY SERVICES

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 2143) to amend chapter 45 of title 28, United States Code, to authorize the Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice to accept voluntary services, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 2143

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. AUTHORIZATION FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES.

Section 677 of title 28, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(c)(1) Notwithstanding section 1342 of title 31, the Administrative Assistant, with the approval of the Chief Justice, may accept voluntary personal services to assist with public and visitor programs.

"(2) No person may volunteer personal services under this subsection unless the person has first agreed, in writing, to waive any claim against the United States arising out of or in connection with such services, other than a claim under chapter 81 of title 5.

"(3) No person volunteering personal services under this subsection shall be considered an employee of the United States for any purpose other than for purposes of—

"(A) chapter 81 of title 5; or

"(B) chapter 171 of this title.

"(4) In the administration of this subsection, the Administrative Assistant shall ensure that the acceptance of personal services shall not result in the reduction of pay or displacement of any employee of the Supreme Court."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. COBLE).

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COBLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on S. 2143.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, this bill was passed by unanimous consent in the other body. It is an innocuous measure that will benefit the Supreme Court in its day-to-day operations, as well as the estimated 1 million visitors who tour the building annually.

The Supreme Court, Mr. Speaker, as all of us no doubt know, is inundated with visitors. Now, this is perhaps a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it is a good thing, because it demonstrates the interest that the American people have in the history of our national jurisprudence. On the other hand, it means that the small group of men and women who conduct tours and deliver lectures at the facility cannot accommodate all these visitors in an orderly fashion.

This bill simply authorizes the Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to accept voluntary personal services to assist with public and visitor programs. Importantly, S. 2143, the bill before us, contains a proviso to ensure that the acceptance of these personal services will not result in the reduction of pay or displacement of any employee of the Court. This restriction is similar to the one which applies to the operations of the Capitol tour guide service.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, over 1 million tourists visit the Supreme Court building each year, and, because of budgetary pressures, the Court has asked Congress to enact legislation permitting volunteers in the Supreme Court Historical Society to conduct public tours of the Court.

As we know, here at the Capitol, the Capitol Guide Service is assisted by 35 volunteers who help with Capitol visitors, and the volunteers have expanded the service to increase the number of tours to the Capitol by approximately 25 percent.

As the chairman has indicated, this bill authorizes the Supreme Court to accept volunteers to assist the public with the visitor program. The volunteers could not be hired unless they waive all claims against the Federal Government arising out of their service, and the bill specifies that the volunteers would not be considered Federal employees. Importantly, the bill prevents paid Supreme Court employees from being fired or having their salary reduced as a result of increased volunteer services.

Having said that, I must point out that concern has been raised about this bill. If adopted, the Supreme Court could accept the services. However, we have not had a hearing on the House side, and I note that apparently no hearing was held on the Senate side either. Because of that and concerns expressed by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS), the ranking member of the full committee, and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr.

FRANK), the ranking member of the subcommittee, it is suggested that we do have a hearing. There is concern among employees that this might have adverse ramifications, despite the language suggesting otherwise.

So that would be my comment. Should this bill pass anyhow, I would strongly urge the administrators at the Court to deliberate collaboratively with the employee groups there.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the gentlewoman from California who, by the way, has been a valued member of the Committee on the Judiciary and specifically a valued member of the Subcommittee on Courts and Intellectual Property.

Permit me just to say this, Mr. Speaker, in response. As I said before, the bill requires the Administrative Assistant to the Chief Justice to ensure that no Supreme Court employee will be displaced or have his or her pay reduced. None of the workers at the Court, including the police officers, who are members of the Fraternal Order of Police, oppose this bill, to my knowledge, and the Chief Justice is enthusiastic about its passage.

I think, Mr. Speaker, and I say to my friend, the gentlewoman from California, I think this is an operational problem that can be cured without requiring the Court to submit a larger budget request, and I urge its passage.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would just note the very courteous remarks of the chairman, and should this bill pass, that that consideration and administrative deliberation would indeed take place as the chairman has expressed.

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

Mr. COBLE. 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 North Carolina (Mr. COBLE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 2143.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### GRANTING FEDERAL CHARTER TO AMERICAN GI FORUM

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 1759) to grant a Federal charter to the American GI Forum of the United States.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 1759

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. RECOGNITION AND GRANT OF FEDERAL CHARTER.

The American GI Forum of the United States, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Texas, is recognized as such and granted a Federal charter.

#### SEC. 2. POWERS.

The American GI Forum of the United States (in this Act referred to as the "corporation") shall have only those powers granted to it through its bylaws and articles of incorporation filed in the State of Texas and subject to the laws of the State of Texas.

#### SEC. 3. PURPOSES.

The purposes of the corporation are those provided in its bylaws and articles of incorporation and shall include the following:

(1) To secure the blessing of American democracy at every level of local, State, and national life for all United States citizens.

(2) To uphold and defend the Constitution and the United States flag.

(3) To foster and perpetuate the principles of American democracy based on religious and political freedom for the individual and equal opportunity for all.

(4) To foster and enlarge equal educational opportunities, equal economic opportunities, equal justice under the law, and equal political opportunities for all United States citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

(5) To encourage greater participation of the ethnic minority represented by the corporation in the policy-making and administrative activities of all departments, agencies, and other governmental units of local and State governments and the Federal Government.

(6) To combat all practices of a prejudicial or discriminatory nature in local, State, or national life which curtail, hinder, or deny to any United States citizen an equal opportunity to develop full potential as an individual.

(7) To foster and promote the broader knowledge and appreciation by all United States citizens of their cultural heritage and language.

#### SEC. 4. SERVICE OF PROCESS.

With respect to service of process, the corporation shall comply with the laws of the State of Texas and those States in which it carries on its activities in furtherance of its corporate purposes.

#### SEC. 5. MEMBERSHIP.

Except as provided in section 8(g), eligibility for membership in the corporation and the rights and privileges of members shall be as provided in the bylaws and articles of incorporation of the corporation.

#### SEC. 6. BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Except as provided in section 8(g), the composition of the board of directors of the corporation and the responsibilities of the board shall be as provided in the bylaws and articles of incorporation of the corporation and in conformity with the laws of the State of Texas.

#### SEC. 7. OFFICERS.

Except as provided in section 8(g), the positions of officers of the corporation and the election of members to such positions shall be as provided in the bylaws and articles of incorporation of the corporation and in conformity with the laws of the State of Texas.

#### SEC. 8. RESTRICTIONS.

(a) INCOME AND COMPENSATION.—No part of the income or assets of the corporation may inure to the benefit of any member, officer, or director of the corporation or be distributed to any such individual during the life of this charter. Nothing in this subsection may be construed to prevent the payment of reasonable compensation to the officers and em-

ployees of the corporation or reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses in amounts approved by the board of directors.

(b) LOANS.—The corporation may not make any loan to any member, officer, director, or employee of the corporation.

(c) ISSUANCE OF STOCK AND PAYMENT OF DIVIDENDS.—The corporation may not issue any shares of stock or declare or pay any dividends.

(d) DISCLAIMER OF CONGRESSIONAL OR FEDERAL APPROVAL.—The corporation may not claim the approval of Congress or the authorization of the Federal Government for any of its activities by virtue of this Act.

(e) CORPORATE STATUS.—The corporation shall maintain its status as a corporation organized and incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas.

(f) CORPORATE FUNCTION.—The corporation shall function as an educational, patriotic, civic, historical, and research organization under the laws of the State of Texas.

(g) NONDISCRIMINATION.—In establishing the conditions of membership in the corporation and in determining the requirements for serving on the board of directors or as an officer of the corporation, the corporation may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, disability, age, or national origin.

#### SEC. 9. LIABILITY.

The corporation shall be liable for the acts of its officers, directors, employees, and agents whenever such individuals act within the scope of their authority.

#### SEC. 10. MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION OF BOOKS AND RECORDS.

(a) BOOKS AND RECORDS OF ACCOUNT.—The corporation shall keep correct and complete books and records of account and minutes of any proceeding of the corporation involving any of its members, the board of directors, or any committee having authority under the board of directors.

(b) NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF MEMBERS.—The corporation shall keep at its principal office a record of the names and addresses of all members having the right to vote in any proceeding of the corporation.

(c) RIGHT TO INSPECT BOOKS AND RECORDS.—All books and records of the corporation may be inspected by any member having the right to vote in any proceeding of the corporation, or by any agent or attorney of such member, for any proper purpose at any reasonable time.

(d) APPLICATION OF STATE LAW.—This section may not be construed to contravene any applicable State law.

#### SEC. 11. AUDIT OF FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS.

The first section of the Act entitled "An Act to provide for audit of accounts of private corporations established under Federal law", approved August 30, 1964 (36 U.S.C. 1101), is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(80) American GI Forum of the United States."

#### SEC. 12. ANNUAL REPORT.

The corporation shall annually submit to Congress a report concerning the activities of the corporation during the preceding fiscal year. The annual report shall be submitted on the same date as the report of the audit required by reason of the amendment made in section 11. The annual report shall not be printed as a public document.

#### SEC. 13. RESERVATION OF RIGHT TO ALTER, AMEND, OR REPEAL CHARTER.

The right to alter, amend, or repeal this Act is expressly reserved to Congress.

#### SEC. 14. TAX-EXEMPT STATUS REQUIRED AS CONDITION OF CHARTER.

If the corporation fails to maintain its status as a corporation exempt from taxation as provided in the Internal Revenue Code of 1986