No matter how many buildings are destroyed, And all the destruction that others can bring, The United States will always rise to the top, All Americans unite, and Let Freedom Ring.

CONCURRENT RECEIPT PART II—VETERANS

HON. DARLENE HOOLEY

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 23, 2002

Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, most of this body is aware of the so-called concurrent receipt penalty affecting our military retirees with service-connected disabilities. While Congress has undertaken gradual steps to remedy this situation, numerous veterans in my home state of Oregon have contacted me about a situation which I feel is equally unfair.

With the conclusion of the Cold War, the Department of Defense employed numerous separation programs to comply with Congressional mandates and decrease the number of active military personnel. The DoD implemented the Special Separation Benefit (SSB), and the Variable Separation Benefit (VSI) which were both designed to award servicemen and women with immediate compensation in return for early retirement from the Armed Services.

What many of these servicemen and women did not know is that by agreeing to leave active duty and accept the SSB or VSI payment, they were effectively signing away the right to receive future service-connected disability payments from the Veterans Administration. As it currently stands, any service member who accepted the SSB payment and is diagnosed with a service-connected disability must repay their payment in full before he or she can receive disability pay. Likewise, members who receive the VSI payment cannot receive the full disability payment to which they would otherwise be entitled.

I find this practice reprehensible. Many service-related disabilities might not become apparent for several months or years after separation. Consequently, everyone who made use of these programs could not have possibly known the way in which they would be affected by the offset provisions. What's more, many service members made the decision to accept the separation pay only because the alternative would be an eventual, forced retirement.

To remedy this problem, I am introducing bipartisan legislation with my colleagues JIM GIBBONS from Nevada and Richard Baker from Louisiana. Please, join me in helping bring an end to this reprehensible practice.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JO ANN EMERSON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 23, 2002

Mrs. EMERSON. Mr. Speaker, I was attending to a family emergency and missed the following recorded votes. Had I been present, I would have voted, Yes on rollcall vote 171, Yes on rollcall vote 172, Yes on rollcall note 173, Yes on rollcall vote 174, Yes on rollcall vote 175, Yes on rollcall vote 176, Yes on rollcall vote 177, Yes on rollcall vote 178, Yes on rollcall vote 179, Yes on rollcall vote 180, Yes on rollcall vote 181, Yes on rollcall vote 182, Yes on rollcall vote 183, Yes on rollcall vote 184, Yes on rollcall vote 185, Yes on rollcall vote 186, Yes on rollcall vote 187, Yes on rollcall vote 188, Yes on rollcall vote 189, Yes on rollcall vote 190, Yes on rollcall vote 191, No on rollcall vote 192, Yes on rollcall 193, Yes on rollcall 194, No on rollcall 195, No on rollcall 196.

BOB STUMP NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 9, 2002

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4546) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2003 for military activities of the Department of Defense, and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2003, and for other purposes;

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to continue with my statement against H.R. 4546, the fiscal year 2003 Department of Defense authorization act. In my prior comments, I detailed how some quality-of-life improvements for active duty and retired military personnel that I strongly supported were overshadowed by unnecessary spending on weapons systems like the Crusader artillery system and the Comanche helicopter.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned in two previous statements about H.R. 4546, the House Rules Committee blocked any amendments to reform or eliminate unnecessary weapons systems from being considered. Today, I want to talk about another weapons system of dubious value, the F–22 Raptor fighter jet, that was fully funded in H.R. 4546. There is no threat that justifies the pursuit of this fighter jet program. Particularly when the Pentagon is simultaneously pursuing two other new fighter jet programs, the Joint Strike Fighter and the F–18E/F.

I offered two amendments on the F–22 that came directly out of the recommendations in a March 2002 GAO report. My first amendment would have reduced the number of low rate initial production aircraft from 23 to 13. My second amendment placed two conditions on the program: requiring a reassessment of the costs, and requiring the Air Force to monitor key manufacturing processes of the private contractors. Neither of these amendments was allowed to be debated by this House. In addition to the GAO, a variety of independent analysts have raised concerns about the F–22. Even the House of Representatives has gone on record expressing concerns. In the House report for the fiscal year 2000 Department of Defense appropriations bill, the Armed Services Committee highlighted a number of concerns about the program including various technical problems, the inability to control rising costs, and the questionable need for the aircraft. The House report even mentioned suitable alternatives to the F–22.

The problems highlighted in the House report have only gotten worse. Unfortunately, Congress seems content to bury its collective head in the sand and move forward with procuring F–22s that are too expensive, don't work, and are unnecessary. A March 2002 GAO report identified a number of ongoing problems with the F–22. In summary, GAO found ''The F–22 did not meet key schedule goals for 2001, the cost to complete planned development is likely to exceed the $21 billion reported to Congress, and the program is not far enough along in flight testing to confirm Air Force estimates of the aircraft's performance.''

The problems identified by GAO include:

Rising cost concerns: In the FY02 DOD authorization bill, Congress removed the development cost cap. Current estimates are the development costs will be $21 billion. However, that cost is likely to rise because flight testing delays may lead to an extension of the development program, and Lockheed Martin's costs, which are borne by taxpayers, have increased. Over the last two fiscal years, Lockheed's costs have exceeded budgets by $218 million. In addition, restructuring the test schedule increased costs by $557 million.

Delays in testing: The Air Force realigned the testing schedule in June 2001 because development test aircraft are taking longer to assemble than anticipated, available test aircraft are not achieving the number of test objectives per flight hour that are specified in the plan, and completion of the test schedule is highly dependent on a single test aircraft rather than the three as originally planned. The Air Force has a goal of ten test points per hour, but the program is only accomplishing seven per hour, 30 percent less than planned. GAO notes, ''avionics testing with development test aircraft has been limited.'' Only around 22 percent of planned avionics test points have been completed. GAO computations show that development flight testing necessary for the planned start of operational testing might not be completed until March 2004, 11 months later than planned.

However, the Air Force now plans to overlap development flight testing with operational flight testing. But, GAO wams ''there is an increased risk involved in the concurrency, and there is still a high risk of not completing an adequate amount of development flight testing before operational testing is scheduled to begin.''

The Air Force has also decided to dumb down the testing. GAO notes, ''the Air Force eliminated and consolidated some test points (specific test objectives conducted during flight testing) and deferred other test points . . . as a result, the combined total flight test points remaining have been reduced by approximately 4,708 points, or 31 percent.''

A recent review by the Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center concluded there was insufficient testing completed to assess nine of the ten key performance parameters. GAO projects that airframe flight testing will have to continue until February 2008 to accomplish all the remaining 8,199 test points with one aircraft, which is almost four years beyond the current schedule. GAO concludes that the Air Force's cheerleading about the success of the test program is largely overblown. GAO wrote, ''the Air Force's estimates are based on limited flight test data, computer models, ground tests, and analyses. Flight test progress has been slower than expected, thus