labs and other labs to really tackle this problem and come up with new ideas.

I don't care if it's wind energy, which happens to be a part of solar energy; whether it's wave energy, which is also derived from solar energy; or whether it's photovoltaic cells. Naturally it helps that very soon photovoltaic cell research will be so good that we will have photovoltaic shingles on every house because we can make them at a cost that eventually will be less than that of the asphalt shingles. If we do that, every house becomes a power-generating system, and much of the electrical needs of each homeowner can be met just by the use of solar shingles on the roof of their home.

This would be a tremendous boon to our country. Relatively free energy; you just buy the shingles which you have to buy anyway, and you get essentially free energy out of it.

So there are many options that we should be pursuing, and we should be encouraging and helping as a Congress, so that we can help the public that is becoming desperate about what to do about the cost of energy and the price of energy.

So I sincerely hope our Congress will tackle this issue and deal with it, and meet the needs of the public and of the planet at the same time.

With that, if you have no further speakers, I'm pleased to yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX).

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Congressman EHLERS. I just want to add my comments to the ones that you've made.

I think that while I'm very much in support of this bill and we want to do whatever we can to help our employees bridge the gap between their military pay and the pay that they would receive here, I think one of the best things we can do for all the citizens of this country is to bring down the high price of gasoline, and that would serve everybody very well.

We can do that. We know we can do that. All we have to do is announce that we are going to expand the supply of American-made energy, and we will immediately bring down the price. That will help all of our citizens, which is what every Member of this Congress should be doing.

We will get to the alternatives. We can be completely energy independent in this country, but we can't do it overnight. In order to get to energy independence with alternatives, which Republicans support, we must supply more gas and oil in the short term, and I support those efforts.

I ask the Speaker, again, to bring forth the American Energy Act so that we can have an up-or-down vote on it and let the American people know are you a pro-American energy person or an anti-American energy person. That's the issue that we're facing.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I find myself a little miffed that they would have to politicize this soldier bill, but I understand we have two soldiers on that side of that bill.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6608.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

DANIEL WEBSTER CONGRESSIONAL CLERKSHIP ACT OF 2008

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6475) to establish the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6475

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Act of 2008''.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) Each year, many of the most talented law school graduates in the country begin their legal careers as judicial law clerks.

(2) The judicial clerkship program has given the judiciary access to a pool of exceptional young lawyers at a relatively low cost.

(3) These same lawyers then go on to become leaders of their profession, where they serve a critical role in helping to educate the public about the judiciary and the judicial process.

(4) The White House, the administrative agencies of the Executive Branch, the Administrative Office of the United States Courts, the Federal Judicial Center, and the United States Sentencing Commission, all operate analogous programs for talented young professionals at the outset of their careers.

(5) The Congress is without a similar program.

(6) At a time when our Nation faces considerable challenges, the Congress and the public would benefit immeasurably from a program, modeled after the judicial clerkship program, that engages the brightest young lawyers in the Nation in the legislative process.

(7) Accordingly, the Congress herein creates the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program, named after one of the most admired and distinguished lawyer-legislators ever to serve in the Congress, to improve the business of the Congress and increase the understanding of its work by the public.

SEC. 3. DANIEL WEBSTER CONGRESSIONAL CLERKSHIP PROGRAM.

(a) SELECTION COMMITTEES.—As used in this Act, the term ''Selection Committees'' means—

(1) the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives.

(b) ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAM.—There is hereby established the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program for the appointment of individuals who are graduates of accredited law schools to serve as Congressional Clerks in the Senate or House of Representatives.

(c) SELECTION OF CLERKS.—Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Selection Committees shall select Congressional Clerks in the following manner:

(1) The Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate shall select not less than 6 Congressional Clerks each year to serve as employees of the Senate for a 1-year period.

(2) The Committee on House Administration of the House of Representatives shall select not less than 6 Congressional Clerks each year to serve as employees of the House of Representatives for a 1-year period.

(d) SELECTION CRITERIA.—In carrying out subsection (c), the Selection Committees shall select Congressional Clerks consistent with the following criteria:

(1) Each Congressional Clerk selected shall be a graduate of an accredited law school as of the starting date of his or her clerkship.

(2) Each Congressional Clerk selected shall possess—

(A) an excellent academic record;

(B) a strong record of achievement in extracurricular activities;

(C) a demonstrated commitment to public service; and

(D) outstanding analytic, writing, and oral communication skills.

(e) PROCESS.—After a Congressional Clerk is selected under this section, such Congressional Clerk shall then interview for a position in an office as follows:

(1) For a Congressional Clerk selected under subsection (c)(1), the Congressional Clerk shall interview for a position with any office of any Committee of the Senate, including any Joint Committee or Select and Special Committee, or any office of any individual Member of the Senate.

(2) For a Congressional Clerk selected under subsection (c)(2), the Congressional Clerk shall interview for a position with any office of any Committee of the House of Representatives, including any Joint Committee or Select and Special Committee, or any office of any individual Member of the House of Representatives.

(f) PLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS.—The Selection Committees shall ensure that Congressional Clerks selected under this section are apportioned equally between majority party and minority party offices.

(g) COMPENSATION OF CONGRESSIONAL CLERKS.—Each Congressional Clerk selected under this section shall receive the same compensation as would, and comparable benefits to, an individual who holds the position of a judicial clerkship for the United States District Court for the District of Columbia within 3 months of graduating from law school.

(h) REQUIRED ADHERENCE TO RULES.—Each Congressional Clerk selected under this section shall be subject to all laws, regulations, and rules in the same manner and to the same extent as any other employee of the Senate or House of Representatives.

(i) EXCLUSION FROM LIMIT ON NUMBER OF POSITIONS.—A Congressional Clerk shall be

excluded in determining the number of employees of the office that employs the Clerk for purposes of—

(1) in the case of the office of a Member of the House of Representatives, section 104 of the House of Representatives Administrative Reform Technical Corrections Act (2 U.S.C. 92); or

(2) in the case of any other office, any applicable provision of law or any rule or regulation which imposes a limit on the number of employees of the office.

(j) RULES.—The Selection Committees shall develop and promulgate rules regarding the administration of the Congressional Clerkship program established under this section.

(k) MEMBER DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''Member of the House of Representatives'' includes a Delegate or Resident Commissioner to the Congress.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2009 and each succeeding fiscal year from the applicable accounts of the House of Representatives and the contingent fund of the Senate such sums as necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks in the RECORD on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 6475, which would establish the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program. This program would bring the most talented law school graduates from across the country to Washington, D.C., and offer them the opportunity to be employed as congressional clerks in the House of Representatives or the Senate.

This program is modeled after the judicial clerkships offered in the Federal courts. H.R. 6475 would offer no fewer than six 1-year clerkships in each Chamber. The clerks would be apportioned equally between majority and minority offices within each Chamber. H.R. 6475 would give recent law grads invaluable insight into the functions and operations of the Federal legislature, and I urge my colleagues to support this program.

I would also like to thank Ms. LOFGREN and Mr. LUNGREN for introducing the bill in the 109th Congress, and Ms. LOFGREN for bringing it up and Mr. LUNGREN for being a prime cosponsor.

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

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6475, which would establish the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program within the House of Representatives.

Instituting this program will create a talented pool of young attorneys within the House at a fraction of the cost of obtaining similar talent through the hiring process. Many of these exceptional individuals will become leaders of their chosen profession. By offering them a judicial clerkship, we may even inspire some to embark upon a congressional career in lieu of life in a law firm or corporation.

For these young men and women, the ability to obtain a judicial clerkship in the very body where laws are created will be an invaluable experience. For the House, it will be a chance to tap into the best and brightest legal minds just as they begin their careers.

While we cannot offer the same compensation package that many top law firms offer, we can offer an opportunity to experience the legislative process in a way that is only possible within the Halls of Congress. Whether they continue their careers in the private or public sector, a greater knowledge and appreciation of the legislative process would be enormously useful to the participants in this program as they become part of the fabric of our Nation's judicial system.

I thank my colleagues on the House Administration Committee, and especially thank Congressman LUNGREN and Congresswoman LOFGREN for introducing this bill.

At this time, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent for Ms. ZOE LOFGREN to control the remaining time on this bill.

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

There was no objection.

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

I would like to thank not only Congressman DANIEL E. LUNGREN for cosponsoring this bill with me, but also note the important support of Dean Larry Kramer, the dean of the Stanford Law School, whose original idea this was, and we two California Members took it up. I think that our country will be enriched by the enactment of this measure.

It has been mentioned, and we all know, the top law graduates of the top law schools in the country are recruited to serve as clerks in the judicial branch, and as a consequence of that experience, those top legal minds then go on to fabulous careers, understanding the law from the point of view of the judiciary. Well, there's nothing wrong with that, but we also want to have top legal minds that relish and appreciate the law from the point of view of the legislative branch, and that is really the grit and the intent of this measure.

As has been mentioned I'm sure, the program created by the bill will have clerks chosen from a pool of exceptional law school graduates who have demonstrated commitment to public service. No fewer than six clerks will be chosen for each Chamber. The clerks will be divided equally among the parties, and they will receive the same pay and equivalent benefits as first-year law clerks in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

As the dean of Stanford Law School, Larry Kramer, said, ''This bill will serve an important role by educating young lawyers and future leaders of the profession about the legislative process. It will be enormously beneficial for both the profession and the public if some of the Nation's brightest young lawyers begin their careers in the legislature and so develop and can convey to the public an appreciation of Congress and the legislative process equal to that lawyers have shown for courts and the judicial process.''

I would like to mention that we were not able to include the Congressional Research Service in the legislation at this time. However, if there is a bipartisan effort to achieve that in the future, I would welcome that collaboration and understand we may yet have the opportunity to do that.

So in furtherance of this bill, I would hope that our colleagues would support it. I would again like to thank my colleague, the former Attorney General from California, DAN LUNGREN, for his cosponsorship.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. EHLERS. I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN).

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Michigan, I want to thank our chairman of the committee, I want to thank Ms. ZOE LOFGREN, who's Chair of one of the subcommittees I serve on in Judiciary, for all the effort that they've put into this. This is a good idea.

Some people who likely will review our comments here would ask the question: Aren't there enough lawyers in Congress? Actually, there are less lawyers now than there were 10 or 20 years ago, but I think that is an interesting question.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I'd be happy to yield.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. I would just note that there's always room for good lawyers, and I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I understand that as well, but some would wonder why we need the influence of more law graduates here, and that's misunderstanding what we're attempting to do here.

Right now both the judicial and the executive branches have clerkship programs which are accessible to those who are graduates of our top law schools. This is particularly pronounced in the area of judicial clerkships. It is considered quite prestigious

and an honor for someone to serve a judicial clerkship.

As the gentlelady from California mentioned, it was the dean of the law school of Stanford University, Larry Kramer, who first raised this issue with me and with her. It was interesting to hear from the law school dean because his message was not what I expected, and he has been quoted here on the floor.

Let me give you a more extended quote of what he said, which is: Clerking for a trial or appellate judge provides young lawyers with an invaluable insider's understanding of the judicial decision-making process. Not surprisingly, judicial clerkships leave young lawyers with a highly court-centered view of the law and the legal system, and precisely because these are the top law school graduates, former law clerks go on disproportionately to assume leadership positions in the bar and in the profession—and again quoting Dean Kramer—explaining in part why the legal profession in this country is heavily tilted toward the courts.

Now, we can argue about whether they are tilted to the right or to the left or they're tilted properly, but the fact of the matter is it is a court-centered view of the law which I think interferes with the delicate balance established by our Founding Fathers in the Constitution, which saw there were worthy and valuable distinctions among the three branches of government.

□ 1600

And we can bemoan the fact that this is the case; we can talk about judges on the bench and we can talk about people not taking their constitutional obligations seriously when they take their oath of office; but if we really want to get down to it, it seems to me this is one of the undue influences that's out there. And so the idea was, as Dean Kramer said, that it would be enormously beneficial for both the profession and the public if some of these young lawyers began their careers in the legislature and, as he said, developed an equal sense of the national legislature. We're not saying that is to disregard or in any way scale down their appreciation for the judicial branch, but rather to raise up their appreciation of the understanding of how this place works—and by this place, I mean the institution of the House of Representatives and the institution of the United States Senate. It would bring them an understanding of the workings of Congress that they would then bring to bear as they move on in their careers, both within the legislature and other branches. And I don't see how that would not be beneficial to this country, healthy for the body politic, and probably end up with better legislation overall.

So I would hope that Members would understand what we're attempting to do here. We're attempting to establish, on an equal footing, a clerkship for top graduates of law schools around the country that they currently have an opportunity to participate in in the executive and the judicial branch. It would be beneficial to us, it seems to me, it would be beneficial to them, but more importantly, it would be beneficial to the public.

And for those who are concerned that this might cut into their MRA, by the terms of the legislation, it would not in any way affect the collective or individual MRAs that Members receive at the present time. As was mentioned before, it would be done on a bipartisan basis so that we would all have the opportunity to benefit from this. And similarly, these clerks would have the opportunity to benefit from exposure to both sides of the aisle.

So I would hope that we would get a unanimous vote in favor of this. This is something that I think will improve the quality of the discussion and the quality of the work that we do around here. But more importantly, I would hope that it would have a lasting impact on the understanding within the bar itself of the proper workings and functionings of the legislative branch, and in fact the quality of work that is provided in the legislative branches. And so I thank the gentleman from Michigan for the time.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the comments made by my colleague from California (Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN). And indeed, this is not a measure that does harm or damage to the judiciary or to the executive branch, but it really is to elevate article I. Sometimes we see our colleagues with little buttons that say ''article I'' on them, and we want to make sure that the important role of the legislative branch is understood by these top legal graduates who will go on to careers in the judiciary, in public service, in law schools and the like.

I want to make clear not only that this has bipartisan support, but that it will be administered in a totally bipartisan way. The name, ''The Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program,'' really selects somebody who was an honored ancestor of the legislative process, not a contemporary, but someone we can look back on with esteem.

The Clerks will be selected by a selection committee that will consist of the committee of Rules and Administration of the Senate, and the Committee on House Administration of the House. And as was mentioned by my colleague and myself, six clerks will be evenly divided between the two parties.

Just by way of example, and without mentioning names, sometimes the courts do not necessarily understand how we do business here. And I'll give three examples recently mentioned to me by judicial officers.

Colloquies on the floor of the House. We know when we stand up to do a colloquy it is to set something in the RECORD for a purpose. It is by agreement, but it has a meaning that is meant to stand as the legislation moves forward. Courts don't always understand the meaning of a colloquy. And I think if we had some of these excellent law students here who helped to write a colloquy and were on the floor as it was being delivered, they would understand and be able to impart to the judicial branch the importance of a colloquy.

Example number two, committee reports. There are things that committees agree on completely but are not actually part of a bill. And they don't need to be part of a bill because they can be implied by the legislation. A committee report doesn't have the force of law, but it should be enormously persuasive to a court looking for the meaning of legislation if the parties—sometimes fractious parties—can agree to language in a committee report, that means something. And I think if we had some of these excellent law students here helping in the committee process to understand how that comes about and the import that it has, it will help them to tell a judge—or if they are a judge later—what that means and how to interpret the law.

And legislative findings, the role of legislative findings; you know, obviously they're precursors to the language itself.

These are just three small examples of how the Congress and its will is not always upheld by the courts, not through any chicanery, not through any deviousness, but just a lack of full appreciation for how the legislative process works.

And so I think this bipartisan measure is a step forward in seeing that that trend in American law interpretation does change, both in the courts, and also in the teaching of law in the Nation's top law schools.

So while this may seem not an earth-shattering measure in some ways, it will have import long after the Members here are retired and reading about the Congress in the paper. What we do here with this clerkship bill will improve the law in America. And therefore, I hope, as Mr. LUNGREN does, that we will have a unanimous vote.

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

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the gentlewoman from California and the gentleman from California on this bill. I think it's an excellent idea. And I have good grounds for saying that because, as I mentioned earlier, I'm a scientist, and the scientific societies of America, for a number of years, have been supporting fellowship programs in which scientists will come and spend one year in the House of Representatives, and thereby learn something about how laws are made. And it has had a profound effect on the scientific community in this country and it has also had a profound effect on the Congress. Some of my best employees have come from that program. If they have worked in the

Congress for a year, either in my office or another office, and I have an opening, they fit in beautifully because so many of the issues I deal with are scientific. So I'm sure this clerkship proposal will be an outstanding program.

And I, frankly, think six clerkships is too little, especially for both Chambers. And I hope that some day we're talking in terms of perhaps 20 or 30 for the two Chambers together because I'm sure it is going to be successful.

With that, I yield what time he may consume to the gentleman from California.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

And again, I appreciate the comments of the gentlelady from California. However, I would be remiss if I didn't respond a little bit to what she said about colloquies and committee reports.

We at least ought to enter into the RECORD the Scalia view of things, which is, law is what is in the law, not what's in the committee report or the colloquy.

One of the important things he tries to point out is that in some ways it would be unfair to members of the public to pass a law with intentional ambiguity that can only be interpreted by a committee report since the average citizen probably doesn't have access to that. And his commonsense notion is that Members should strive to make laws understandable by the language that they have in them. And it is often misunderstood as to his interpretive analysis of law and the Constitution when he talks about original understanding.

What he is basically saying is that when you have a law or constitution that is presented to the people, they can only be held to the usual and customary understanding of the words as they are in the law, otherwise you basically are fooling the people.

Now, if there is a necessary ambiguity, obviously a colloquy or a committee report aids in the interpretation of understanding what it was in terms of the meaning of the words at that time. But I understand the gentlelady may have a slightly different view of the Constitution than Justice Scalia, as some do, but I thought it important that we try and understand that we, as legislators, ought to strive to put the precise words we want into the law because too many times on this floor I've heard people say, don't quibble about those words, we'll let the courts decide what it is. And having been a trial lawyer—not necessarily a plaintiff's lawyer, although I have done that in my time as well—the difference between one word, two words, or three words, or a clause or a sentence in a statute can make all the difference in the world. And I would just hope that we would be attentive to our responsibilities and disciplined in our actions such that we try and choose the words precisely that carry the meaning that will give the average citizen an understanding of what we're doing here.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I would be happy to yield to the gentlelady.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. As the gentleman knows, I have substantial disagreements with Justice Scalia and his interpretation of the Constitution.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Somehow I thought that might be the case.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. You thought that might be the case. But the point I was making on colloquies and committee reports is this: Justice Scalia says—and I think properly—that the role of the judiciary is to interpret the Constitution and the law, not to make it up themselves. And so to the extent that there is unintended ambiguity in a law that is written by the Congress where the committee report or colloquy can give the court some insight into what the intentions were on the part of the legislative body, then that is a helpful thing. And understanding how that develops would be enormously useful.

There are times, as the gentleman knows, where ambiguity is the oil that makes the legislative process work. I remember Wilbur Mills suggesting there could not be an agreement on what Medicare would cover, that it would cover a ''spell or illness.'' And maybe that was necessary in 1965, but it was not the kind of ambiguity that could have been resolved through a colloquy.

And I thank the gentleman.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Reclaiming my time, I would just say I remember an instance about 25 years ago on the floor here dealing with a matter, the Bankruptcy Act. And the late, great chairman of judiciary, Peter Rodino, got up and gave his interpretation of it which was contrary to the interpretation we had. So every time he would get up to give his colloquy I would get up to give ours to make sure that when the judges looked at it they would see there were two contrary positions so they could decide, as they should, under the words we actually used in the statute. And I thank the gentlelady.

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I was expecting one person here to be a speaker, that person has not shown up. So maybe I will just make a few additional comments in the hopes that their elevator can get to the second floor. And that would be that, in addition to the Dean of the Stanford law school we were advised that the progress of this bill is being watched by law professors and deans throughout the United States who have really resolved that this is going to be a very positive thing for the development of American law.

I would just note also, as Mr. LUNGREN has pointed out, we do these things sometimes very quickly. I think the addition of six top law students in each body—as the ranking member of the full committee has suggested, as time goes on maybe we will find that it works so well it should be expanded—I certainly do think, however, it is appropriate to start at this level, do an assessment. And I think our committee, the Administration Committee, will be in an ideal position to do an assessment.

But no doubt, if we have some of the smartest young lawyers in the United States here in this institution, they will not only bring the knowledge of this institution out to the world after they become top lawyers, but they will also help us become even more excellent legislators. So I think that this is a benefit that really there is no down side to it. So it has really been a pleasure to work with the bipartisan cosponsors of this bill.

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

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

First of all, let me say a few more words about energy, and perhaps your speaker will be here by that time.

But I first want to say, I think your clerkship program is an excellent idea. And I think it would have been wonderful if your clerks could have heard this discussion that you just had with the gentleman from California.

□ 1615

It's just exactly the sort of experience that they should have, and it will certainly benefit them. But I have always been impressed with the court clerks that I have encountered over the years, some of whom are good friends of mine whose entire career changed and was shaped by their experience in clerking for someone, whether it was at the State court of appeals level or the Federal judgeship level. So this without a doubt is going to be a very important bill.

I also would like to make a few concluding remarks about the energy issues, as I outlined a little while ago. This time I want to mention two sources that are wonderful energy resources, and that we should use more often and more wisely. They are energy resources, that have been in this Earth for many, many years, ever since its creation. First is nuclear; second is geothermal. Both are ample sources of energy if used properly. Both are essentially free in the sense you're not paying anyone for the energy; you're just paying for the equipment and process to extract the energy. And when nuclear energy fell on bad times in the United States almost 30 years ago and basically no one was going to build another reactor in the United States, I said this is going to last one generation because it's a decision based on emotion, not on reality or on the facts. And that's precisely what is happening now. After one generation, we are recognizing that we made a mistake at that

point, whereas France has put 80 percent of their electrical power in the hands of the nuclear reactor business and India has done 90 percent. They have been using nuclear power successfully at reasonable cost with no dangers, no accidents, and this indicates that we can do the same. I think that would be immensely useful.

I am particularly perturbed with the current trend to use more and more natural gas to generate electricity. You can imagine what this is going to do to the price of energy for homeowners who heat their homes with natural gas, who are going to have to pay more as natural gas becomes in shorter supply because the power plants are using such copious amounts of it. In addition to that, I note that natural gas, frankly, is too valuable to burn. It's an invaluable feedstock for the petrochemical industry, and the more we use it for other purposes, the more we increase the price of natural gas for manufacturing purposes, we reach a point now where almost all the new fertilizer factories in the world are being built in other countries, not in America, because the price of natural gas here is getting so high that it's too expensive to make fertilizer out of natural gas in our Nation, so it is manufactured in other countries.

We have made a number of mistakes in our energy policy. I would hope this Congress, before the end of this session, would resolve this, set us on a new track, so that we would once again return to an era of cheaper energy, and that our Nation may prosper and our people may be able to keep warm.

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

Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I have said really all I have to say on the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program of 2008. As mentioned, this will be a tremendous improvement to the development of American law, and I have given the support that has been expressed for the measure here today on the floor. I am hopeful that we will have a unanimous vote for this important measure.

I thank the chairman of the committee, Mr. BRADY, for his tremendous support on this and in every way, as well as the ranking member, Mr. LUNGREN. And I don't know if Mr. BRADY has anything further to add.

If not, I would simply say please vote ''yes'' on H.R. 6475.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SERRANO). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6475.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

RURAL VETERANS ACCESS TO CARE ACT

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1527) to amend title 38, United States Code, to allow highly rural veterans enrolled in the health system of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive covered health services through providers other than those of the Department, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1527

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Rural Veterans Access to Care Act''.

SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM OF ENHANCED CONTRACT CARE AUTHORITY FOR HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF VETERANS IN HIGHLY RURAL AREAS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1703 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e)(1) The Secretary shall conduct a pilot program which permits highly rural veterans—

''(A) who are enrolled in the system of patient enrollment established under section 1705(a) of this title, and

''(B) who reside within Veterans Integrated Service Network 1, 15, 18, and 19,

to elect to receive covered health services for which such veterans are eligible through a non-Department health-care provider.

''(2) The election under paragraph (1) shall be made by submitting an application to the Secretary in accordance with such regulations as the Secretary prescribes. The Secretary shall authorize such services to be furnished to the veteran pursuant to contracting with such a provider to furnish such services to such veteran.

''(3) For purposes of this subsection, a highly rural veteran is one who—

''(A) resides in a location that is—

''(i) more than 60 miles driving distance from the nearest Department health-care facility providing primary care services, if the veteran is seeking such services;

''(ii) more than 120 miles driving distance from the nearest Department health-care facility providing acute hospital care, if the veteran is seeking such care; or

''(iii) more than 240 miles driving distance from the nearest Department health-care facility providing tertiary care, if the veteran is seeking such care; or

''(B) in the case of a veteran who resides in a location less than the distance indicated in clause (i), (ii), or (iii) of subparagraph (A), as applicable, experiences such hardship or other difficulties in travel to the nearest appropriate Department health-care facility that such travel is not in the best interest of the veteran, as determined by the Secretary pursuant to regulations prescribed for purposes of this subsection.

''(4) For purposes of this subsection, a covered health service is any hospital care, medical service, rehabilitative service, or preventative health service authorized to be provided by the Secretary under this chapter or any other provision of law.

''(5) For purposes of this subsection, a health-care provider is any qualified entity or individual furnishing a covered health service.

''(6) In meeting the requirements of this subsection, the Secretary shall develop the functional capability to provide for the exchange of medical information between the Department and non-Department health-care providers.

''(7) This subsection shall apply to covered health services provided during the 3-year period beginning on the 120th day after the date of the enactment of this subsection.

''(8) Not later than the 30th day after the close of each year of the period described in paragraph (7), the Secretary shall submit a report to the Committees of Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Senate a report which includes—

''(A) the Secretary's assessment of the program under this subsection, including its cost, volume, quality, patient satisfaction, benefit to veterans, and any other findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to such program, and

''(B) any recommendations that the Secretary may have for—

''(i) continuing the program,

''(ii) extending the program to other or all service regions of the Department, and

''(iii) making the program permanent.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement the amendment made by subsection (a) not later than the 120th day after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleagues and I were able to work together to craft this important piece of legislation regarding our rural veterans. I want to thank the Subcommittee on Health chairman, Mr. MICHAUD of Maine, and Ranking Member Mr. MILLER of Florida for the bipartisan leadership they demonstrated in working on this important bill. And, of course, the leadership on this bill has been for many years Mr. MORAN of Kansas.

As we all know, many rural veterans face significant challenges accessing veterans' health care services due to their geographical distance from VA facilities and limited transportation services. Some of these veterans must face commutes of several hours just to utilize some simple health care services.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has acted to better provide health care service to rural veterans, and I appreciate the action they have taken in the past. However, more can and should be done to ensure that our rural veterans have adequate access to care for the services to which they are entitled.

This bill, H.R. 1527, would supplement existing VA efforts by requiring the VA to conduct a 3-year demonstration project to allow rural veterans in four Veterans Integrated Service Networks to elect to receive covered services through non-VA providers. It would allow some rural veterans to receive health care locally, eliminating