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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FLEISCHMANN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
April 30, 2014.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHARLES J. FLEISCHMANN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2014, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

HONORING THE CHERRY FAMILY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Cherry family from Girard, Illinois, as they prepare to retire from Cherry's IGA, a family-operated business for more than 100 years in Macoupin County, Illinois.

Cherry's opened in 1908 as the Girard City Meat Market, owned by Clarence Cherry, as an extension of his family farm located only 1 mile away from the store.

In the 1950s, the store turned into a full-service grocery store under the watch of son, Phil Cherry. In 1987, Phil's son, Jim, took over the store and has owned it to this day.

It is hard to overstate the importance of a local grocery store and what a strong local grocery store can mean to the residents of a small community like Girard. For more than 100 years, the Cherrys were more than just small business owners, they were friends, community leaders, and public servants.

The Cherrys embodied all that is great about this country, and they achieved the American Dream. So congratulations, and thank you to the Cherry family and enjoy your well-earned retirement.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. GUTIÉRREZ) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, tick, tick, tick. The clock and the calendar march on. Congress just took a 2-week vacation, and I am back to remind my colleagues that the window to pass legislation to fix our broken immigration system, stimulate the economy, keep families together, and strengthen America is ticking away.

With just 25 legislative days until the July Fourth recess, the Republicans have a difficult task, and it gets harder with each passing day. But I am optimistic this morning. Last week I saw the Speaker of the House in his district urging his Republican colleagues to get to work and legislate on this important issue. Republicans from COFFMAN in Colorado to KING in New York are calling for reform.

In my home State of Illinois, practically every Republican running for office came out to stand with former Speaker Denny Hastert and the business community to say they want Republicans to allow a vote on immigration. One speaker, Carole Segal, the cofounder of Crate & Barrel, shared the microphone with two American kids whose parents are being deported, and there was not a dry eye in the house. I knew there was a reason I shopped at Crate & Barrel.

While some House Republicans, the Speaker, and key Republican supporters and funders get it, the majority leader did not list immigration as something the House should address this spring. It is nowhere on the legislative calendar.

In order to fix what is broken about our immigration system, we must do three things at the same time. We must repair and improve our legal immigration system so that we can eliminate the black market; we must strengthen and humanize our enforcement system so that our laws serve our national interests; and we must legitimize and destigmatize those people who actually live, work, and raise families in our country by inviting them to join us on the right side of the law so that they can earn the privileges and fulfill the responsibility our great Nation demands.

The easiest way for Republicans to get this issue behind them would be to schedule a vote on the bipartisan bill that passed the Senate last year. An hour or 2 of debate and a 15-minute vote is all we need. Done, punto. Not one of the Republicans who thinks that legislating on immigration reform this year is ''too hard'' needs to vote for it, and it will still pass comfortably the House of Representatives.

But House Republicans say that the bill has too many pages and doesn't have the imprint of House Republicans. Okay. Fine. We have introduced the discharge petition for H.R. 15 for any Republicans who change their minds.

Republicans say they prefer a series of short, digestible bills to address the three components of reform. Fine. Pass

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multiple bills to fix our immigration system, and we Democrats will work with you and the Republican majority. But remember, more bills take more time, and time is not something Republicans have plenty of.

Republicans have said they don't want a special path to citizenship for adults who entered the country illegally. They want some sort of noncitizenship status that might or might not lead to citizenship over time. My side finds that very hard to swallow. At least we want to keep talking and hear you out. We want to see if we can reach a bipartisan agreement and move forward.

Democrats think citizenship is important, and we are ready to fight for it. We think making everyone play by the same set of rules is very, very important to the American people. Okay. If this is the only way you will fix the three components of immigration reform, let's talk and let's see if we can reach an agreement.

Now we hear the warning that if Obama does anything, even a clarification of the current deportation policy, Republicans say Obama will be ''poisoning the well'' for reform. This is from a party that seems to hardly need an excuse to scream about mass amnesties, Mexicans rushing across the border, and Obama's plot to undermine and sabotage America.

Sadly, even some important Democrats don't think any form of Presidential action would be prudent at this time when it comes to deportation. They seem to be saying: Let's just ride out the pain of deportations in the Latino and immigrant communities while we score political points against the do-nothing Republicans.

Maybe we can try again when Democrats are in charge again, even though we didn't do it the last time we were in charge. Yes, Democrats had 257 votes, and we didn't call a single vote for 4 years on comprehensive immigration reform.

One by one, deportations are driving fathers and mothers out of our communities and leaving children in foster care. Neither party is free from blame, and neither party seems to have the appropriate level of urgency when it comes to the deportation of and the devastating effect our broken immigration system has on our immigrant families.

The Republicans control the calendar, and Democrats will bring 200 votes to the table if you work with us. We must all be willing to put it on the line, to stand up for what is right, what is achievable, and what will heal and strengthen our Nation. We still have the next 25 days. Time is of the essence, Mr. Speaker.

KENTUCKY'S EQUINE INDUSTRY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BARR) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight an industry that is at the very center of the culture and economy of Kentucky's Sixth Congressional District, our signature equine industry.

Central Kentucky is rightfully designated as the ''Horse Capital of the World,'' but this is a little title that we happily share with our neighbors in the city of Louisville on the first Saturday of May. As we celebrate the highlight of the thoroughbred racing season, the annual running of the Kentucky Derby, the Run for the Roses, I want to also acknowledge the men and women who dedicate their lives to our signature horse industry and the significant economic and jobs impact of this equine industry in Kentucky and beyond.

When you think of the Kentucky Derby, the fastest 2 minutes in sports, you think of Aristides in the first running of the Derby in 1875; you think of Orb, who won the Derby last year in 2013; and all of the great thoroughbred horses that came in between, from Sir Barton in 1919, the first Triple Crown winner; Gallant Fox; Omaha; War Admiral, who was of course in that duel with Seabiscuit; Whirlaway; Count Fleet; then in modern times, Secretariat, the fastest running of the Kentucky Derby in 1973; Seattle Slew, a Triple Crown winner in 1977; and our last Triple Crown winner, Affirmed, in 1978.

Despite the growing popularity of the thoroughbred racing industry and the vast number of our constituents that enjoy equine recreation, many Americans remain unaware of the significant impacts of the horse industry on our modern economy. The horse industry has a significant presence in at least 45 States and across many facets of the economy.

According to a comprehensive study by the American Horse Council, the Nation's 9.2 million horses created $102 billion in annual economic activity. This economic engine supports 1.4 million full-time jobs. In our Commonwealth, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, it is estimated that 80,000 to 100,000 people owe their jobs to our signature horse industry.

While many outside the industry perceive thoroughbred racing perhaps as a sport only reserved for the rich and famous, we in Kentucky know differently. We know that that is simply not the case. Horse farms in my district range anywhere from small family operations with fewer than 20 acres and only a half dozen mares to world-renowned breeding operations that attract thousands of mares from across the globe. Further, these farms support a myriad of related industries, such as agriculture, manufacturing, retail, tourism, just to name a few. I will invite anybody watching on C–SPAN to come to central Kentucky and visit some of our world-famous horse farms. Clearly, this is an industry that brings people with an affinity and passion for horses together, regardless of their socioeconomic background.

Kentucky's horse industry is critical to our economy, which is why I have led of number of efforts in Congress to promote the equine industry. I serve as the chairman of the Congressional Horse Caucus. This caucus serves as a forum to provide Members of Congress the opportunity to learn about the impact of government policies that impact the equine industry and to collaborate with government leaders and industry stakeholders from across the country.

I have introduced two bills impacting the tax treatment of horses. The first bill, H.R. 998, titled the Equine Tax Parity Act, would eliminate the 44-year-old tax provision that discourages investments in the equine industry and discriminates against equine assets.

The second bill, H.R. 2212, the Race Horse Cost Recovery Act of 2013, would make permanent the 3-year depreciation schedule for horses, for race horses, which is critical to the health of Kentucky's horse racing industry as well as job growth and other horse-related industries.

I plan to continue my efforts to advance these critical bills and urge any colleagues in the House to contact my office if they wish to join the Congressional Horse Caucus or support these important legislative and job-creating initiatives.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, as we gather with friends and family this Saturday, the first Saturday in May, to watch the 140th running of the Kentucky Derby—again, the fastest 2 minutes in sports—let's not forget to honor all of the men and women who make this great sport possible. From the farm, to the sales, to the track and beyond, horses require the loving care of dedicated professionals at each step along the way. Without the efforts of the owners, the breeders, the trainers, the farriers, the grooms, the jockeys, the track operators, the employees, and all the people who support the horse industry, without their efforts, our great horse industry, our great pastime, simply would not be possible.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. I rise in memory of the devastating atrocities that were committed in Nazi-occupied Europe, where more than 6 million people lost their lives. In every generation, we must bear witness to the events of the Holocaust to fully understand what transpired and to ensure that this would never happen again.

To fully comprehend the horrors of the Holocaust, we must lay our eyes on the hallowed grounds where the cruelest crimes against humanity were perpetrated. I recently returned from Ukraine. There, I stopped to pay my respect at the site of the Babi Yar massacre in Kiev. To stand in the place where more than 100,000 people were

shot and buried in a mass grave brings reality to the horrible accounts of the massacre. Every person had a name and a story.

I have twice visited Auschwitz-Birkenau. I walked through the rooms where the prisoners slept, filled now with the possessions they left behind. I saw the fields where prisoners stood waiting in line for their meager rations. I saw the walls where Jews were lined up before Nazi soldiers shot them.

□ 1015

I saw the gas chambers where you could still see scratches on the walls from prisoners desperate to escape.

Every person had a name and a story.

When I followed the train tracks out of Auschwitz, I reversed the path that led so many to their final resting places. From that moment, I have committed to remember what happens when senseless hatred prevails.

Unfortunately, the hatred and intolerance that led to these crimes against humanity is still alive today.

At some point, no survivors of the Holocaust will be alive to recount their heroic and heartbreaking tales of survival. We must make sure that we never repeat this dark mark on world history by teaching our children tolerance, and never forgetting the innocent victims of the Holocaust.

The Hebrew word ''yizkor'' means ''we will remember.'' Though Holocaust Remembrance Day was observed on April 28 this year, I ask that we dedicate ourselves to remembering the horrors of the Holocaust and commit to prevent genocide in our lifetimes and in the future.

IN SUPPORT OF DESIGNATING APRIL 30, 2014, AS ''DIA DE LOS NINOS: CELEBRATING YOUNG AMERICANS''

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in recognizing and celebrating ''Dia de los Ninos,'' or ''Day of the Children.''

On April 30, many countries around the globe, especially in the Western Hemisphere, dedicate this special day to the children.

Whereas, the National Latino Children's Institute, serving as a voice for children, has worked with cities throughout the United States to declare April 30, 2014, to be Dia de los Ninos: Celebrating Young Americans, a day to bring together Latinos and other communities in the United States to celebrate and uplift children, I urge all Americans to nurture and invest in all children and support them in leading healthy and prosperous lives.

In honor of Dia de los Ninos, I encourage all Americans to instill creativity, ingenuity, and a love of learning in all children and to support Federal investments that expand access to a high quality education for all, from cradle to career.

In honor of Dia de los Ninos, I urge President Obama and House and Senate leadership to pass commonsense immigration reform and take bold steps to protect immigrant children and keep families together.

For Latinos, passing humane immigration reform and reuniting children and parents who have been separated by our Nation's broken immigration system is of the utmost importance. Family reunification and providing much-needed relief to millions of immigrant children, youth, and families is critical to the health and well-being of Latino families and to our Nation's future.

In honor of Dia de los Ninos, I call on our Nation's parents to become more involved in the education of our children. As the primary teachers of family values and culture, I urge parents to encourage their children to go to college and to contribute to our Nation and to their respective communities.

Above all, I ask parents to preserve and pass on their rich language and cultural traditions to future generations.

We in south Texas recognize the rich cultural traditions that exist along the U.S.-Mexico border region, and we are proud that many of our children speak at least two languages. We are determined to increase educational attainment at every level.

In the United States, many Latino families continue the tradition of honoring their children on Dia de los Ninos. Today, I wish to share this custom with my colleagues in both the House and the Senate and with all Americans.

Given the significance of Dia de los Ninos in the Western Hemisphere, I urge Congress to honor the gifts of Latino and immigrant children to society by designating April 30 as Dia de los Ninos: Celebrating Young Americans.

SCIENCE CHICKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) for 5 minutes.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. Speaker, the Science Chicks, a new club in Mount Prospect, Illinois, represents the future of our country.

These 24 middle school girls built their remote operating vehicle and equipped it with motors and an underwater camera. They did all the electrical wiring themselves from scratch. At a competition at the University of Illinois, their submersible vehicle picked up items from the bottom of the pool's floor.

These girls represent millions around the country that have the ability to achieve greatness in the STEM fields. It is now our job to support them.

When I was in flight school learning to become a helicopter pilot, all the flight instructors asked me to please try to find more women to join the Army flight school. They said that women made excellent natural pilots, but that they were less likely to even come forward and apply to the flight training program than their male peers.

I wonder how many girls around the country could achieve great things in math, science, or even flight school, but are simply unaware of the opportunities that are out there for them. We need to make sure that our public schools have the resources to invest in STEM education and that girls are encouraged to reach their full potential.

This is not only about empowering our daughters, but building the future of our economy and strengthening American competitiveness abroad. STEM education is crucial to providing good jobs for future generations and allowing our businesses to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, let's follow the example of the Science Chicks and support STEM education throughout this country.

A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COOPER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, the job of a Congressman is, simply put, to keep America number one. This Congress is failing at that job.

Today, the Financial Times reports that, for the first time since 1872, America will soon no longer have the largest economy in the world.

This is the headline: ''China To Overtake the U.S. As Top Economic Power This Year.''

We are losing our position to China, which is overtaking us some 3 years earlier than expected.

Even more importantly, last week, The New York Times reported that our middle class, which used to be the world's richest, no longer is.

This Congress simply must take responsibility for this. We must pass job-creating, pro-growth legislation. But this Congress has failed to do that.

This Congress has failed to take up and pass major infrastructure legislation, immigration reform, and tax reform.

We know how to solve many of these pro-growth problems, but this Congress is refusing to do so.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues should not blame anyone else for this mess. We are the largest body of elected leaders in this country. All we need to do to solve these problems is look in the mirror.

STATEMENT ON ANNOUNCEMENT BY NBA COMMISSIONER ADAM SILVER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to address the statement made just yesterday by NBA Commissioner Adam Silver.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, Commissioner Silver dealt swiftly, decisively, and broadly with the reprehensible racist tirade that has been attributed to Los Angeles Clippers owner, Mr. Donald Sterling.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to applaud Commissioner Silver for his swift, forward-thinking, decisive action and for taking a meaningful step forward in improving racial relations here in America, and having a very progressive impact on the culture of our Nation by forbidding the racial and racist attitude of any individual that may seek to hide behind the popularity and celebrity status that we give to our athletes and other entertainers.

Commissioner Silver's response to Mr. Sterling's appalling statements sent a message to all those who may hold racial or discriminatory attitudes that there is no place to hide here in the United States of America.

Whether it comes from the floor of the House, whether it comes from the other body, whether it comes from any quarter, we should all be outraged at the racial attitudes of intolerance and indifference and the hatred that is being spewed across the airways of our Nation. Three times over this last month we have heard reprehensible commentaries by others. We should all have felt a sense of enormous outrage at the comments of these individuals.

Much is left to be done, Mr. Speaker.

The one thing that is before the Nation and the NBA is that the owners have to do what they are required to do. I urge the owners to do what is best for the Clippers, what is best for the players in the NBA and the NBA itself, what is best for the fans of the NBA, and what is best for the Nation. I ask the owners this morning to remove Mr. Sterling from the privileges of owning an NBA team and remove him from the equation that he currently operates in. And do that finally, firmly, and quickly.

We need a decision by the NBA owners now to remove Mr. Sterling.

TOLLING WILL CRIPPLE OUR ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FORTENBERRY). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the United States Department of Transportation yesterday delivered to Congress a draft highway reauthorization which proposes to remove the prohibition on tolling existing capacity on interstate highways.

As my colleagues are aware, the interstate highway system was created to enhance the flow of goods and services throughout the country.

□ 1030

These investments have served to improve our economy and the lives of our citizens, while allowing America to remain competitive in a global market.

Plain and simple, tolling existing capacity will do nothing more than cripple our economy. In fact, Mr. Speaker, any attempt to remove the prohibitions on tolling interstate highways must be highly scrutinized.

In my home State of Pennsylvania, in 2007, a scheme was put together to toll Interstate 80. This was a prime example of a betrayal of public trust, where the Commonwealth, under then-Governor Rendell, aimed to use toll grants on other projects unassociated with the interstate.

Mr. Speaker, tolling can work for new capacity or to mitigate congestion by providing alternative lanes of travel, but it must be done in a transparent manner. Pennsylvania's plan was not crafted for the public good, but to cover up for a history of highway mismanagement and cronyism throughout the bureaucracy.

Now, I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on finding a fiscally responsible way to maintain investments in critical transportation infrastructure projects across the country.

As we move forward on a new highway reauthorization, let us restore the public trust, not further erode it. The American people deserve as much.

TURNING DARKNESS INTO LIGHT AND HATRED INTO LOVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. YODER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, on the afternoon of Sunday, April 13—Palm Sunday and the eve of Passover—it was a beautiful spring day in Overland Park, Kansas. Many families were gathering across the community to be close and to celebrate these meaningful and important religious holidays; yet on that day of great beauty, tremendous evil was arriving in my community. On that day, hatred, combined with bigotry, would spur a tragedy of horrific proportions in Overland Park.

That afternoon, a singing competition for the best high school singers in the metropolitan area was occurring at the Jewish Community Center just down the street from where my family lives.

The Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City has been in operation since 1914 and is a bustling center for events, meetings, discussions, exercise, and service of a diverse community where all people and all faiths are welcomed.

That day, two members of my church, the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, were driving into the parking lot of the Jewish Community Center to participate in this competition—a grandfather and his grandson—when, out of nowhere, a man driven by hatred, anti-Semitism, and a life of racism decided to take their innocent lives.

Reat Underwood, one of the victims, a 14-year-old boy and freshman at Blue Valley High School, had an amazing voice. Reat's love of theater came naturally to him. With that training, Reat began his theater career at age 4 in Camelot Academy.

Reat was heavily involved with volunteering, and he cared about his community and was very active in Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts. Carrying on the traditions of his grandfather and uncles, Reat was a Cub Scout with Pack 3097 at Blue Valley Middle School and then a Boy Scout with Troop 37, the Red-Tailed Hawk District, where he had reached Life Scout. He was preparing for his Eagle Scout boards with Troop 92, to be held in May.

Reat will be missed by his family, especially his younger brother, Lucas, who gave a beautiful tribute at Reat's services.

Reat's grandfather, Bill Corporan, who was taking Reat to this singing contest, also was a victim. Reat's family all lived in Overland Park, and his grandparents had moved there from Oklahoma, so they could live near their grandchildren.

Dr. Corporan had met and married his wife, Melinda, in Ponca City, Oklahoma, and they were married in 1965. He graduated with a doctorate of medicine from the University of Oklahoma in 1972, and the whole family became very big Sooner fans.

He operated family medicine practices throughout Oklahoma before finally moving with his wife to Overland Park to be close to their family. He continued serving his community as a physician and a medical director to the very last days.

A third victim, Terri Lamano, was arriving at Village Shalom, a retirement community almost a mile down the street to visit her mother. She too became a victim of vile bigotry and hatred from that violence that afternoon.

Terri worked as an occupational therapist at the Children's Center for the Visually Impaired in Kansas City. She spent her time working with children and families of those in need.

Her daughter, Alissa, described Terri as ''a beautiful soul who always thought of everyone else before herself. She was the best mother, wife, sister, and friend that anyone could ask for.''

Sadly, Terri was taken from us just 2 days before her 25th anniversary with her husband.

Today, I rise to pay tribute to these victims. We will never forget them. Our hearts break for them, and this Congress honors them for their beautiful lives and legacies.

Although the events which transpired are evil and will have long-lasting effects in our community, they have also brought us together and strengthened the bonds between all of us.

Mr. Speaker, my district is a diverse one, demographically. It is a strong community with a strong community spirit. With urban, suburban, and rural

areas, the Third District of Kansas is a microcosm of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, these hate crimes were shocking to our community as these types of actions were so foreign to us. The days following the horrendous act, though, were filled with love, community, and comfort as members of our entire community came together to support one another.

Hundreds and hundreds of community members gathered together for an interfaith unity service at the Jewish Community Center. Vigils were held. Thousands turned out for memorial services.

Mr. Speaker, this type of hate and violence has no place in our society, and our Kansas community, as many often do, rallied and demonstrated in unified voice and spirit that one act of violence cannot break our bonds and tear us apart.

Mindy Corporan, a friend of mine and the woman who tragically lost both her son and father that day, stated something profound after these events. She said:

> We want something good to come out of this. We don't know what that's going to be, so we want people to let us know if they think something good has come out of it.

Mr. Speaker, I was there for the week following the shooting. I saw the reaction of the entire community and the support and comfort our community has shown each other.

Mr. Speaker, the entire Third District of Kansas honors Reat, Bill, and Terri and every single other human being who has been the victim of racism, discrimination, hatred, and evil. We honor them, each and every one of us, by doing our part to turn darkness into light and to turn hatred into love.

INCREASE IN CARGO PREFERENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, we have challenges in the United States with the notion of how we are going to protect American-flagged ships, the capacity to be able, in times of national emergency, to provide the transport services that we need.

I have been a supporter of the Jones Act. I think it is important to have cargo preference. I think it is important to be able to manage. I am interested in other areas that we might explore to be able to make sure that the United States is not at the mercy of other nations in times of emergency.

I will say that I have been dismayed at recent activities to force, in the Coast Guard reauthorization, to increase the cargo preference for American food aid from its current level of 50 percent to 75 percent. This is outrageous, and it is not the answer.

The situation we face today is that we require this food to be delivered in American ships. It increases the delay in terms of when the food gets there, and we are competing with local communities.

Mr. Speaker, in an ideal world, we would do what most international aid countries do when they deliver assistance. They use money to buy local products. This helps support local agriculture, and it provides the food when it is needed, not months later.

The United States primarily delivers surplus commodities that we produce in the United States that are shipped halfway around the world, that arrive often too late, and it is in direct competition to local producers.

It undercuts their capacity to take care of themselves, while our assistance gets there too late, and it increases the cost of doing so.

Now, in times past, the government had reimbursed the cost differential. That was eliminated in the Budget Control Act, so that is gone, and we have had this provision that was snuck in. It was not widely debated. Members of the House and the Senate did not understand what was going on.

We have had terrific leadership from Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL in the House Foreign Affairs Committee to try and focus on ways to be able to provide greater flexibility to United States aid, so we can help more people at less cost and not undercut their capacity to support themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that my colleagues will take a good, hard look at this provision. We need to make sure that this is removed, to at least go back to where it was at 50 percent; but more important, we ought to look at how we provide this food aid around the world.

At a time when we are providing lavish support to American farmers and ranchers, they don't need the additional support to undercut production of food in some of the poorest and most desperate countries in the world.

We ought to stretch those dollars. We ought to make sure that that aid arrives sooner, when it is needed; and we ought not to have this artificial mechanism that is both more expensive, less efficient, and most important, it hurts the people that we are trying to serve.

There is bipartisan leadership in the House that is trying to fix this, working with NGOs around the country and around the world. We ought to roll up our sleeves and do this in a cooperative way and prevent undercutting these poor countries and eliminating the ability to get food to them quickly.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 41 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. WALORSKI) at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, we give You thanks for giving us another day. Lead us this day in Your ways, that our Nation might be guided along the roads of peace, justice, and goodwill.

Recent events, including the tragic murders in Kansas motivated by religious bigotry and the unfortunate high-profile racism displayed in Los Angeles, remind us that we as a nation still have work to do to guarantee that our founding documents and their soaring ideals are realized by all who dwell in our land.

Grant strength and wisdom to our Speaker and the Members of both this assembly and the Senate, to our President and his Cabinet, and to our Supreme Court, as well as to us all, that all our institutions and all our communities fulfill the noble promises of our representative form of self-government.

Grant us the courage to become whom You have called us to be—our better selves—so that the United States might continue to be a nation worthy of emulation.

Bless us this day and every day, and may all that is done within the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

> I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.

NO BONUSES FOR IRS TAX DELINQUENT EMPLOYEES

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address

the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, last week we learned that the IRS paid out more than $1 million of taxpayer-funded bonuses and other awards to more than 1,100 employees who owe back taxes. That is outrageous.

This bonus scandal comes at a time when the IRS is under fire for targeting Americans based on their beliefs and amid reports that reveal IRS workers broke the law by engaging in political activity on the job. Simply put, the IRS is out of control. IRS employees are failing to comply with the very laws they were hired to enforce. Worse, it further proves that Washington doesn't respect nor care how Americans' hard-earned tax dollars are spent.

It is time for the IRS to respect hardworking American taxpayers, and that is why I am introducing a commonsense bill to prohibit the IRS from providing bonuses to tax delinquent IRS workers.

I urge my colleagues to join in this effort. It is the right thing to do.

HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the United States Department of Transportation released a proposal to spend $302 billion over the next 4 years on highway and transportation projects in our Nation. Though this is an improvement on the current pathetically weak investment in roads and bridges, this is not nearly enough to adequately address America's broken infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the American Society of Civil Engineers gives the United States infrastructure a D grade and predicts that an additional $3.6 trillion investment will be needed by 2020 just to bring America's infrastructure to a state of good repair.

Making a real investment, going beyond the President's proposal, is not only an investment in our Nation, it is also an important investment in our Nation's people. Nation-building right here at home can't be outsourced and could create millions of jobs and dramatically lower the unemployment rate.

I urge my colleagues to support large-scale investment in America, supporting American people and American businesses.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

(Mrs. WALORSKI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the 63rd annual National Day of Prayer. Tomorrow morning, I will join a bipartisan group of Members to gather together and pray for our country.

As we continue to face obstacles each day, both as a country and as an individual, I urge Americans to join us in praying for wisdom and guidance, thanking God for the many blessings we have been given in this Nation.

Our thoughts and prayers are with our brave servicemen and servicewomen and their families who are serving our country overseas and here, protecting our freedom and putting their lives on the line for our security. We pray they return home to our grateful Nation swiftly and safely.

Let us also continue to pray for peace in our own communities. Psalm 145 promises that the Lord is near to all who call upon Him, and I urge you to join me tomorrow in observing the National Day of Prayer.

ANIMAL EMERGENCY PLANNING ACT OF 2014

(Ms. TITUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise on National Animal Advocacy Day to announce the introduction of the Animal Emergency Planning Act of 2014. This bill would require entities regulated under the Animal Welfare Act to develop a plan for how they will respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and manmade, that would most likely occur in their facilities.

Regulated animal breeding facilities, commercial animal dealers, transporters, exhibitors, and research facilities would be required to submit plans to the USDA annually and to train their employees on the contingency plans and procedures.

Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, as well as other recent disasters, have highlighted the need for planning to minimize the impact of these disasters on animals, which can have devastating effects.

Local first responders, nongovernmental agencies, and private individuals in the past have often ended up shouldering the cost and taking on the responsibility of protecting and caring for these animals. It is only fair and reasonable to require emergency readiness plans from those in these businesses. So please join me in cosponsoring this legislation.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TAX CREDIT

(Mr. MARCHANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of making the research and development tax credit permanent. America has a long tradition of supporting research and development.

The R&D tax, which was first enacted in 1981 under President Ronald Reagan, stimulates investment, creates high-value jobs, and drives economic growth. But the R&D credit has never been made permanent. In fact, the credit expired at the end of last year, which has caused significant uncertainty and hurts long-term investment for businesses of all sizes.

The roller coaster of tax extensions, expirations, and renewals should stop. Businesses need to make decisions on what is best for their workers and companies, not the stop-and-go policies of an uncompetitive Tax Code.

Permanency of the R&D tax credit will propel U.S. competitiveness, and it will also help promote future investment, innovation, and job growth right here at home.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

(Mr. KILDEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, today there are 2 million Americans that stand to lose everything they have worked for, through no fault of their own—2 million Americans that are working Americans that get up every day and work hard to find their next job. They are America's unemployed who have lost their extended unemployment benefits. They stand to lose everything.

Rather than taking up H.R. 4415, which I introduced right after the Senate acted on a bipartisan basis to deal with this problem of the unemployed in our country, to make sure that that unemployment compensation is there for them when they need it, rather than take that up, the House Budget Committee has sent to this floor for its consideration a budget that would slash essential programs to provide a safety net for those hardworking Americans who stand to lose everything in order to fund tax cuts—big tax cuts—for America's wealthiest people. That is policy that we just can't tolerate. Rather than taking up the needs of those 2 million, we have taken on the challenge of trying to provide more tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.

If this had happened because of a storm, we would act overnight. We need to take up H.R. 4415 right away.

BIPARTISAN TRADE PRIORITIES ACT

(Mr. SMITH of Nebraska asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, given the fact that 95 percent of consumers live outside our borders, the U.S. must continue to pursue trade opportunities. The U.S. actually had a trade surplus with our 20 trade agreement partners in 2012.

Trade agreements expand opportunities and fuel competition, which benefits consumers and can strengthen and protect American interests around the world. Though trade agreements make sense strategically and economically,

some nations, however, are not playing by the rules.

Barriers to agriculture are the most pressing issue for my home State of Nebraska, but every industry is subjected to outdated tariffs and nonscientific barriers which countries fashion to protect their own domestic industries.

If the U.S. fails to lead, our exports will be placed at a competitive disadvantage to those from countries moving forward with aggressive trade agendas. To enhance U.S. leverage in the marketplace, we need to pass the Bipartisan Trade Priorities Act. By renewing this act, we would demonstrate seriousness about formulating enforceable, science-based rules and empower the rest of the world to follow suit.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AGENDA

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, all you need to do is watch one episode of ''Mad Men'' to know that women in the workforce have come a long way. While we would like to say that everything is better now, we certainly know that is not the case.

On the central coast of California and across the United States, women continue to earn less than men for equal work. Child care costs more than college tuition. Access to earned paid family leave, maternity leave, and sick days is lagging. These are barriers for women, but they also have a ripple effect on their families and on our local economies.

We are not powerless to address this, and that is why I hosted an open community forum last week to explore the many ways that we can support an economy that works for women and families. That is why we need a vote on the Women's Economic Agenda, a slate of legislative proposals to strengthen the middle class and our local economies. Because we know that when women succeed, America succeeds.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

(Mr. PALAZZO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, this week, our Nation observes the 63rd National Day of Prayer. Leaders have been gathering in our Nation to recognize this day since Congress recognized it in 1952. We have always been and still remain a nation under God.

This week, I will continue to pray for our Nation. I will pray for my colleagues who serve with me here in Congress. I will pray for the people I serve in south Mississippi. I will pray that God Almighty continues to watch over our people and that he will continue to bless this land.

Also, my prayers and my thoughts are with all those in my home State of Mississippi and throughout the country who were affected by this week's storms. I want to thank my colleagues who have reached out to my office and to our delegation.

This week, as we bow our heads once more to observe the National Day of Prayer, we also remember the 35 lives lost, the loved ones who mourn them, and the hundreds of communities who are picking up the pieces to rebuild their lives.

□ 1215

NOMINATION OF SHERYL LIPMAN

(Mr. COHEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, today, the House will consider the nomination by President Obama of Ms. Sheryl Lipman to be a district court judge in the Western District of Tennessee.

Yesterday, with less than 60 votes, cloture was lifted in the Senate.

Ms. Lipman will assuredly be confirmed by the Senate today. She is an outstanding jurist whom I recommended to the President. She was counsel to the University of Memphis, an esteemed attorney in private practice, and the executive director of Diversity Memphis, a group that brings people together. She was recommended by a bipartisan group of ad hoc lawyers in Memphis as the highest-qualified person seeking the position. She will serve the district well.

I commend President Obama for his nomination, and I thank Senators ALEXANDER and CORKER for their bipartisanship in voting for the lifting of cloture, voting for her today, and helping this nomination come about.

COMMEMORATION OF HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

(Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, to pay respect to over 12 million people, including 6 million Jews, systematically murdered by the Nazis. We learn how ordinary men and women can turn a blind eye to massive suffering and death.

This January, I traveled to Poland to observe the 69th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp. We were joined by representatives and parliamentarians from 60 different countries, over half of the Knesset from Israel, and many, many survivors.

The memory of the Holocaust is seared forever into the consciousness of a generation of people who survived it. Through their stories, the lessons of that dark time serve as a warning to future generations.

In the words of Elie Wiesel:

> Human suffering anywhere concerns men and women everywhere.

It is with that sentiment I vow: never forget, and never again.

SEXUAL ASSAULT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

(Ms. KUSTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KUSTER. Mr. Speaker, it astonishes me that by the time women graduate from college, one in five will be a victim of sexual assault.

Colleges are institutions of higher learning, and no student—especially young women—should ever feel threatened on the campus that they call home for 4 years.

I applaud the President for announcing a series of efforts to strengthen Federal involvement and provide schools with the tools needed to end sexual assault on campuses. We must work across the aisle to put an end to this violence and to give victims the support they need.

The new Web site launched yesterday, notalone.gov, will do just that: increase transparency through annual surveys and information on the prevalence of sexual assault on campuses.

As a member of the third class of women ever to graduate from Dartmouth College, I was proud to see President Phil Hanlon step up to address unsafe and inappropriate behavior on the Dartmouth campus and to see the University of New Hampshire recognized for its initiatives to reduce sexual violence on campus.

We must continue to address these issues head-on and ensure a safe and secure environment for learning for all college students, men and women.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4486, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015; AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 4487, LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 557 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 557

Resolved, That at any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4486) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member

of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. Points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the chair of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. When the committee rises and reports the bill back to the House with a recommendation that the bill do pass, the previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. At any time after adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4487) making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Appropriations. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The bill shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill for failure to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI are waived. No amendment to the bill shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 3. Pending the adoption of a concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2015, the amounts provided for current law mandatory budget authority and outlays contained in the statement of the Chair of the Committee on the Budget of the House of Representatives in the Congressional Record dated April 29, 2014, shall be considered for all purposes in the House to be allocations to the Committee on Appropriations under section 302(a) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

SEC. 4. During consideration of H.R. 4486 and H.R. 4487 pursuant to this resolution, the suballocations printed in House Report 113–425 shall be considered for all purposes in the House to be suballocations under section 302(b) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER). The gentleman from Oklahoma is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the Rules Committee met and reported a rule for consideration of the first two appropriations bills that the House will consider for fiscal year 2015: H.R. 4486, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act; and H.R. 4487, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act.

The resolution provides an open rule for consideration of H.R. 4486 so that all Members have the opportunity to come to the floor and offer amendments on this important piece of legislation.

The resolution also provides a structured rule for consideration of H.R. 4487, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, which is customarily considered in this manner. This structured rule makes in order eight amendments.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present to this House the first of what I hope are many appropriations bills for fiscal year 2015. Because of the Ryan-Murray budget agreement late last year, the Appropriations Committee has been able to move expeditiously and report these two bills for consideration by the whole House. In fact, this is the earliest that appropriations bills have been considered in this House since 1974.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, both of these bills enjoy strong bipartisan support. Both were reported out of committee by voice vote and take into account updated priorities for the coming fiscal year.

I am proud, for example, that we were able to provide additional funding for our veterans, who have given so much in service to our country. I am also proud that these bills maintain the fiscal discipline this country so desperately needs.

The MilCon-VA bill actually spends $1.8 billion less than fiscal year 2014, and the Legislative Branch bill provides for level funding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Chairman ROGERS for beginning this process in earnest, and look forward to consideration of additional appropriations measures at the appropriate time.

I urge support for the rule and the underlying legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would like to thank my friend from Oklahoma for yielding me the customary 30 minutes for debate.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 4486, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2015 provides for $165 billion in appropriations for veterans programs, military construction projects, and other agencies and programs. H.R. 4487, the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2015, provides for $3.3 billion for legislative branch activities.

Clearly, the parties working on this matter worked together, and we need more of that in this institution. This bipartisan effort brought Democrats and Republicans together to draft legislation that appropriates funds to military construction projects, improves quality of life for veterans and military families, and allows for the continued operation of the essential functions of our Nation's governing body.

Included within these measures is an increase of $8.8 billion for veterans benefits programs, guaranteeing those who have dedicated themselves to defending our Nation will receive the benefits they earned.

I am very proud of the fact that Mike Sykes is sitting with me today, who is one of those veterans that is working in my office and prepared me for this particular day. I would like to thank him, TOM, and all of the people that work with us with reference to this particular part of the responsibilities that we have on the Rules Committee.

H.R. 4486 provides for significant reductions to Defense Department construction spending, which is in line with the President's fiscal 2015 request, but uses those savings to increase total funding for the Veterans Affairs Department by 7 percent.

This shift represents the growing awareness that as we wind down the costly wars that we have been engaged in for over a decade, we must now turn our full attention to supporting those who will bear the cost of those wars for decades to come.

□ 1230

Last week, I participated in a ceremony for World War II, Vietnam, and Korean war veterans where we were honoring a gentleman that has spent a large portion of his career in making sure that veterans receive their proper due.

It was telling to me that we had not done all that they anticipated that we could, and, therefore, I am hopeful that we will take cognizance of the fact that the veterans coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan will have tremendous needs, and, hopefully, this small advance will allow for us to attend them properly.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is provided a total of $158.2 billion in budget authority, an increase of almost 7 percent over last year. This legislation ensures full funding for essential VA compensation and benefits programs in areas like education, vocational training, and housing assistance.

This measure also includes $58.7 billion in advance funding for the VA, ensuring that veterans will continue to have full access to their medical care needs, regardless of where Congress stands in the annual appropriations process.

The underlying legislation includes funding for important national programs and activities, such as the Medical and Prosthetic Research account, Post-9/11 GI Bill authorities, and encouragement for the department to maximize the availability of mental health services to veteran victims of sexual trauma while serving in the military.

H.R. 4487, the Legislative Branch Appropriations bill, while a bipartisan effort—and for the most part, noncontroversial—still falls short of restoring funding levels for Member offices and committee staffs.

As with their fixation on cutting spending on any investment in our Nation's infrastructure, education, and scientific research, my friends on the Republican side continue to believe that you can reduce the budget indefinitely and still get the same product.

What they fail to acknowledge is that, eventually, there comes a breaking point where the lack of investment produces tangible reductions in the quality of the product rendered, and unfortunately, that time is fast approaching for Members' offices and committee staffs.

Two reports mentioned by the minority members on the Legislative Branch Subcommittee bring into stark relief the consequences of ongoing funding shortfalls.

The first, by the Congressional Management Foundation and the Society for Human Resource Management, shows that over 50 percent of congressional staff cite salaries as a major factor in their decision to leave their positions.

The second, by the Congressional Research Service, found that, between 1977 and 2010, House committee staff levels dropped by 28 percent, while Senate committee staff levels have increased by almost 15 percent over the same time.

Either the Senate is doing a lot more work than we are, or we are seriously hamstringing our ability to conduct thorough research and debate on the critical issues before us today.

We cannot continue to decimate our staffs and committees, while asking for more and more from them. As we must be responsible stewards of the resources that the American people have entrusted us with, so too must we be responsible to those who have chosen public service.

Just as we cannot continue to allow companies to pay nonliving wages, we cannot continue to pay our staffs in the same manner that we have. We can and must do better.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking my good friend for putting an emphasis and a spotlight on an area of bipartisan cooperation in the veterans area. He is precisely right in the concern that both sides of the aisle have for the men and women in uniform that have fought this Nation's battles.

While the wars themselves have been contentious, I actually don't think the funding of veterans has ever been contentious, regardless of who was President and regardless of who was in control of this Chamber.

Quite frankly, as I recall, during the Bush years, we increased veterans expenditures by about 100 percent over an 8-year period. That has continued under President Obama.

Again, you can never do enough, but I think the Congress actually, over an extended period, has really tried in this area and has worked together quite well in a bipartisan sense.

My friend also referred a little bit to the legislative branch, and there, again, we probably have some areas of agreement, maybe some areas of disagreement, but not profound ones.

The reality is we are in a difficult time financially. My friend is absolutely correct when he points to some of the reductions in House expenditures. We have reduced, by about 14 percent, House expenditures over the last 3 or 4 years.

I would suggest, while those changes have been difficult, they have been appropriate, given the size of the deficit and the fiscal difficulties we had.

It is important to note, in this budget, we make no further reductions. As a matter of fact, we actually increase expenditures in some important institutions that actually support Congress and its work.

We have not done it again, as my friend has correctly stated, for Members' offices or for committees. We did do a little bit of that last year in raising so-called MRAs and committee budgets.

This year, because of the allocation we had, frankly, I have chosen, as chairman of that committee, to focus on things like the Government Accountability Office, the Government Printing Office, the Capitol Police, the Congressional Budget Office, areas that are absolutely indispensable in the operation of this institution. The Library of Congress, another one where the Congressional Research Service is housed, again, is very important to what we do.

Hopefully, as we go forward, we will be able to do more in some of these areas, but I think, given what we had, we have done reasonably well; and again, while these have been tough decisions, they have been made in a bipartisan manner with the cooperation between majority and minority on the appropriate Legislative Branch Subcommittee.

Finally, my friend did point to the Senate, and I suppose we always have a little bit of envy of the other body in terms of its funding. I would suggest, while their expenditures have gone up, they have not been particularly dynamic in their legislative performance.

Frankly, far be it from me to offer a definitive opinion. We normally let each institution do what they want to do, but I am always happy for the contrast in the budget of a Republican House and a Democratic Senate because I think it is abundantly clear which one is serious about fiscal responsibility and which one is not, and I suspect we will have that debate going forward.

Again, I thank my friend for his remarks and his focus on what is genuinely important, and I know, when he talks about this institution and its staff and its functions, he does so with genuine respect and genuine concern.

Again, some of those concerns, I certainly share, and perhaps, going forward, as we did last year and we tried to do in some of the supportive institutions this year, we can restore some of that capability that I know he and I would both like to see us have.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased at this time to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), the ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies.

Mr. MORAN is leaving us after this session, and he will be sorely missed, but he takes it upon himself to address an issue that is of vital concern to all Members of the House of Representatives.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my very good friend, Judge HASTINGS of Florida. Thank you very much for your service to this country, Judge.

Mr. Speaker, my comments, although critical, will be in no way personally critical of my very good friend from Oklahoma with whom I serve on the Appropriations Committee. He knows my very high regard for his integrity, his judgment, his character; and I value our friendship.

I rise in opposition to this rule, not the Military Construction-Veterans part—because that is an open rule, that is not at issue—but with regard to the Legislative Branch.

There are several amendments that should not have been made in order, should not, in my view, have even been taken seriously, but the reason I oppose it is particularly because there was an amendment that was not made in order that should be discussed on the floor of this House.

I offered an amendment, a very modest one, to provide $25 a day to the Members in the form of a housing allowance for the days that we are in session—only the days we are in session. Now, we have been in session an average of 112 days per year recently, so that would have come out, not coincidentally, to exactly what our salaries would have been raised by, had there

not been a freeze included in this Legislative Branch Appropriations bill.

Frankly, it is an incentive for the Congress to be in session more days, but it is far more important than that. It would also have only applied to people who live more than 50 miles from Capitol Hill. I live 10 miles. In fact, it would not apply to any of us directly anyway because we can't raise our own salaries. It would only apply to future Congresses.

That is what this amendment is about. It is about the composition of this Congress, this institution, in the future, and that is why it is important.

I know it is not going to be popular among our constituents. When the word got out I suggested it in Mr. COLE's subcommittee and on full committee, we got hundreds of calls, all of them negative, most of them profane; but that doesn't mean that it is an issue that should not be discussed on the House floor.

We have denied pay increases to ourselves 11 times since I came into the Congress. There was a deal made a couple decades ago that said, if you don't receive money from speeches and honoraria, in return, the Congress will simply increase its pay by the cost of living each year, so it will be less politicized.

But what we did not only eliminated those outside sources of income, but we have in fact, politicized the issue by freezing our pay consistently. In fact, over the last 5 years, we have frozen our pay. This will be the sixth year in a row, and it is creating a serious problem, a problem that is only going to be exacerbated in the future.

I know the opinion of our constituents, but one of the things they may not be aware of is that the District of Columbia has one of the highest rental costs in the Nation. It is about $27,000 a year right now for a very modest rental apartment, and it goes up each year.

At the same time, since I came into the Congress, congressional pay has gone down by one-fifth. We are paying ourselves one-fifth less than we were in 1992, so it is very difficult for many Members to afford to live here.

This is the first time that this pay freeze has been included in a Legislative Branch appropriations bill. It sets a precedent, and it is a precedent that is going to be very difficult to reverse. I don't think either party is going to take it upon themselves to try to change this. It is going to become obligatory in each successive Legislative Branch appropriations bill.

So I suspect, 5, 10, 15 years from now, it is still going to be the same; and what is the result of that?

Well, it means that the Congress is probably going to be composed of two types of Members. One will be those Members who come in for one, two, three terms and then, frankly, cash out, go into the private sector, take advantage of that experience, albeit limited, in the Congress, and then provide well for their families.

□ 1245

The second class of Member is likely to be those who are independently wealthy, who, in fact, as some do, could afford to give back their salaries because they don't need it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I yield an additional 30 seconds to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. MORAN. I thank the Member.

So what does that mean? It means those people who are in their thirties, and early forties, who have young families, who, in fact, have home mortgages, who have unpaid student loans, who are small business owners, they are all going to be less likely to represent our constituencies who are most represented by those folks who have difficulty meeting their costs day after day.

I think this is very dangerous. It is a dangerous precedent. We should be able to discuss it. And that is all we ask for. I didn't expect a positive vote, but I expected a discussion of a very important issue as to how this Congress is going to be represented in the future.

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

First, I want to begin by extending the same regard and personal affection to my friend that he was kind enough to display toward me. I have had the privilege of serving with him on the Appropriations Committee, obviously, ever since I arrived at that committee; and we currently serve on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee together, the Legislative Branch Subcommittee together, and Interior Subcommittee together. And on that committee, Interior, of course he was an absolutely superb chairman. I happen to think he is an even better ranking member. But he was a superb chairman, and we have worked together on many items. And I, like my friend from Florida, am going to miss my friend from Virginia, who I think has rendered distinguished service in this Chamber, and certainly to our committee.

In terms of his suggested amendment, I will make two points. First, we are advised this is a clause 2 violation to be legislating on an appropriations bill; and I thought there was a reasonable chance, secondly, that we would have a chance to discuss this and he would have a chance to make his point.

And I am glad that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) did make the point that he made because I think it is a very important point to be made. I particularly share your concerns about the long-term character of the body, and I think those were well stated. I don't think we are in any danger right now of reaching that point, but I think my friend does point out a trend that could occur.

I would also be quick to add, there are about as many different styles of Members as there are Members themselves. Some people come here with the idea of being here for a long time. Other people come here for shorter periods of time, not with the idea of cashing out, but because they believe that is the appropriate way to serve.

In my State, my good friend Senator COBURN has always lived by term limits. He did when he was in this Chamber. He has, again, in the Senate. So not every Member that comes here and serves 6 or 8 years is trying to cash out. They just think that is the appropriate length of time, and that is a judgment that is quite often shared by their constituents. And again, I think either one is appropriate. I think Members and districts make that decision for themselves.

But I also think, in consideration of the decisions we have made in the last several years—by both parties, by the way. Again, my friends, when they were in the majority, had some concerns about increases in salaries as well, and I think that was because they saw the fiscal problems of the country.

We have had to make some tough decisions around here in the last few years. We are going to have to make, I think, some more tough decisions. And I think sometimes, to add legitimacy to those decisions, you have to lead by example. I think that is what we have tried to do. I think that is what my friends tried to do as well during the period that they were in the majority. So as long as we are preaching fiscal austerity, we have got to practice a little fiscal austerity.

But I want to conclude by saying, I still think my friend's point is a very important one to be heard. I am glad he made the remarks that he did and has raised it.

I am sorry for your staff because I am sure the incoming mail and calls have been extraordinary.

But again, one of the things I like about my friend, even when I disagree with him—because on occasion, we do—he is never afraid to articulate a position and present a point of view. And if there is a little fire associated with that, so much the better. I think he enjoys the give-and-take of that. And that is one of the things I am going to miss the most about him when he departs this Chamber.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, before yielding to the next speaker, I yield myself 30 seconds.

Mr. Speaker, just in response to my friend from Oklahoma, what Mr. MORAN pointed to was the fact that moderate rent in this metropolitan area is $27,000 a year. I don't think it is unreasonable for us to not only have a discussion, but to do something about the fact that there are Members that are here that can't afford that on the salary that they make. Now, it may be that the constituency is unsympathetic. It may be that these are tough times.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I yield myself an additional 30 seconds.

It may be that these are tough times, but the simple fact of the matter is we have at least 20 Members of the House of Representatives living in their offices, and I don't think that that is right. And I think that the public needs to know that, and I think once the public understands that a lot of that is attributed not only to that Member's idea about how to serve, but the fact that he or she cannot serve in a proper manner living in accommodations that I think they deserve by getting to this high station.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. HAHN), a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Ms. HAHN. I thank my friend from Florida.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for working with me to include two much-needed provisions in this Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations report. This bill makes important steps in fulfilling the promise that we have made to our veterans by providing job search assistance and offering homeless assistance to veterans displaced by domestic violence.

The unemployment rate for veterans is 9 percent compared to 6.7 percent nationwide, and it is even higher for women veterans. The unemployment rate for our women veterans is 9.6 percent. And after fighting for this country, we should ensure that they have a job and a place to live.

Veterans have skills our businesses need, and the VA should assist in matching potential employers with job-seeking veterans. My provision will encourage the VA and the Department of Labor to create a job placement service.

Also, I am very pleased that the chairman included language covering veterans displaced by domestic violence. Due to an oversight in our current law, the legal definition of ''homeless veteran'' differs significantly from the standard civilian definition of ''homeless person.'' This means veterans fleeing from domestic violence could be excluded from receiving the benefits available to other homeless veterans.

The language included updates the definition of ''homeless veteran'' to bring it into line with the rest of the law. This meaningful change to this policy will make a large difference in the lives of veterans, particularly women veterans, displaced from their home due to domestic violence. In addition, this change is supported by several veterans organizations, such as the VFW, AMVETS, and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans.

Mr. Speaker, both of these provisions represent a real step forward for fulfilling the promise to our Nation's veterans. And while sometimes we discuss our own living situation here, what is really important today is making sure that our veterans are housed with dignity and respect.

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

I want to thank my friend from California for working so closely with Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP on what is a genuinely important contribution to the legislation; and I think, frankly, it is pretty exemplary of the manner in which Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP worked together throughout this process. I saw it myself during our full committee markup where, literally, they were working together to make changes to try and respond to Members' legitimate concerns in this area and did it right to the last minute of the bill.

So I know we are going to have contentious moments in the appropriations process; we always do as we go forward. But in this particular case, in this legislation, and certainly between the chairman and ranking member, I think we have an example of how to work together in a bipartisan fashion that most Americans, if they had a chance to learn about it, would be genuinely pleased with.

So again, I thank my friend from California for participating outside the committee in that. I think she made a very valuable contribution, and I am pleased that she made that point. And again, I recognize the wonderful work of Mr. CULBERSON and Mr. BISHOP.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased at this time to yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT), my good friend.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, Judge HASTINGS, for his friendship, his consideration, and his assistance during my time here in Congress. And I am pleased to recognize the very fine Member, my good friend, Representative COLE from Oklahoma.

I will speak later, at another time, about the appropriations bill on the legislative branch. I now want to speak in support of the Military Construction, VA and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

For 4 years in a row, the Appropriations Committee has placed in the bill an additional $20 million for suicide prevention and mental health outreach services. Several people have made this possible, starting with my New Jersey colleague, Representative RUNYAN, who has worked with me very closely and in a very bipartisan way on this issue over the last 4 years. I want to thank the subcommittee chair, Representative CULBERSON, and Ranking Member BISHOP for their steady support of our efforts; and of course to the full committee leaders, Chairman ROGERS and Ranking Member LOWEY, for their support.

Since 2012, the committee has increased funding for suicide prevention and outreach by $120 million overall at the request of Representative RUNYAN and me and other Members who have joined us in this effort, but our work on this issue is far from over.

Last week, The Washington Post reported that, while the suicide rates for our Active Duty force have come down in recent years, we have actually seen a tragic increase in suicide rates among our Guard and Reserve and veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs' own statistics show that suicides among veterans have risen from an average of 18 per day in 2007 to about 22 per day, each one a tragedy. And I fear that the number may be even higher than is recorded.

I have no doubt that this committee and every Member of this body is committed to reversing this tragic trend, and these additional funds will certainly help. I believe that Congress must now give greater attention to the question of why we are seeing a difference emerging in the suicide rates between our Active Duty force, on the one hand, and our Guard and the Reserve and veterans population, on the other.

While this bill will be the last VA appropriations bill on which I work in Congress, I know that other Members who share my concern will carry on this work, and for that, I am grateful.

I hope that Congress will authorize a regular permanent increase in funding for mental health and suicide prevention so that these annual appeals for appropriations will not be necessary in the future.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I yield the gentleman from New Jersey an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. HOLT. Finally, I would say to anyone who is listening—my colleagues and the public alike—if they know a current or former servicemember who may be in need of help, Vets4Warriors, which is the Defense Department's New Jersey-based peer-to-peer counseling program, can help. The phone number is 1–855–VET-TALK. Calls are free, answered 24 hours a day, staffed by former servicemembers. It is the best lifeline we can offer.

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

I want to begin by thanking my friend from New Jersey and again recognize his very special and very distinguished service in this body. This is a typical example of the good sense and the compassion he brings to the floor on a regular basis, and I know I appreciate that. And while we are in different parties, he is one of the people, like my friend from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) who spoke earlier, that I most admire and I think is generally admired on both sides of the aisle. So I associate myself with the remarks he made and appreciate that very, very much, and I wish him well in whatever he chooses to do next because he has certainly distinguished himself here, as

he had in his academic career before he came here. And whatever he does next, I know he will be equally distinguished in that field, but we will miss him very much in this body.

And with that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if we defeat the previous question, I will offer an amendment to the rule to bring up H.R. 1010, our bill to raise the Federal minimum wage to $10.10 an hour.

□ 1300

I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) to discuss the importance of raising the minimum wage.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding time to debate the rule.

Pop quiz. There is a piece of legislation that will give more than 25 million Americans a pay raise, bring nearly 1 million Americans out of poverty, and lower total food stamp aid by $4.6 billion.

What do you do? What do you do? If you are the House Republican majority, you schedule a vote for H.R. 627, the National Park Service 100th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act, and not legislation that accomplishes the items I just mentioned by raising the minimum wage.

What is it going to take for my Republican colleagues to do something that will actually help the economy? They came into the majority after the 2010 midterm elections saying that priorities one, two, and three were jobs, jobs, jobs. But this body hasn't seen anything substantive that would show that to be the truth.

Since 2011, the House Republicans forced the shutdown of the government, threatened the full faith and credit of the United States, and developed an obsession with repealing the Affordable Care Act. They have done nothing to help the American people.

No American working full-time should live in poverty. Raising the minimum wage will increase the take-home pay for more than 28 million Americans. It will add $35 billion to the economy and higher wages through 2016. It will create 85,000 new jobs as a result of the increased economic activity.

But make no mistake. Those statistics are not likely to change their minds. No facts likely will because their refusal to give millions of Americans a raise is not about facts or economics; it is about keeping their sugar donors happy—sugar donors like the Koch brothers and Sheldon Adelson.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. TAKANO. And while these sugar donors are throwing 10s of millions of dollars away on campaign ads in select toss-up districts, regular, hardworking Americans are struggling just to keep their heads above water.

For our country to move forward and continue to grow, we must do more for those who need help. President Franklin Roosevelt once said:

> The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for those who have little.

To provide enough, we must raise the minimum wage.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the previous question so we can bring the minimum wage bill to the floor and get to work growing our economy and helping working families.

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

Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate what my friend from California had to say, the reality is this legislation doesn't have anything to do with the minimum wage, and frankly, it would be inappropriate to consider the minimum wage here. It would be legislating on an appropriations bill, something that as a rule we do not do around here.

Second, while not wishing to engage in a long debate about the minimum wage, I will say this. Remember, the people of this country and the people of individual States have the opportunity to move on this issue when they choose. Indeed, 19 States, if I recall correctly, actually have minimum wages above the Federal minimum wage.

There is serious concern that the one-size-fits-all minimum wage doesn't make a lot of sense. I can tell my friend I don't pretend to be an expert on what the cost of living in California or New York is, but I am sure it is considerably higher than it is in the State of Oklahoma, and at the end of the day, I actually trust the Oklahoma Legislature, the Oklahoma Governor, and the Oklahoma electorate to make this decision for themselves. I don't think imposing a national solution or national standard in this case is necessary or desirable.

So, again, I think you leave this to the wisdom of the States and localities. I think that is what our Founders generally envisioned we should do when we had questions of this nature.

Again, I am sure we will have this debate another time and on other occasions. It is a perfectly appropriate debate to have. It is not an appropriate debate, it would not be something we could do legislatively on this particular rule or the underlying legislation. So it seems to me not a strong reason to vote against either one because this vehicle could not carry the legislation that my friend from California would like to see enacted.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would advise my friend from Oklahoma that I am the last speaker, and I am prepared to close if he is prepared to close.

Mr. COLE. I am prepared to close whenever my friend is.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Thank you very kindly.

Mr. Speaker, it has been one of our more syrupy debates around here, and it is because of the bipartisan nature that allowed for this legislation to come to the Rules Committee and then to be put here on the floor.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that we can be pleased by the level of support provided in this legislation for essential veterans programs. America's veterans deserve the very best support our Nation has to offer, and I am pleased to note that Democrats and Republicans came together to craft legislation that provides the necessary resources for veterans and their families.

At the same time, though, we must realize that if we continue to strangle the support for the offices that are tasked with creating the legislation and programs to support those very veterans, we will eventually begin to fail them, as well.

We must break free from the false logic that all spending is bad spending and realize that investments in our country, our infrastructure, our education, our medical research, or even our legislature is a sound one.

Mr. Speaker, if we defeat the previous question, I am going to offer an amendment to the rule to bring up H.R. 1010, our bill to raise the Federal minimum wage to $10.10 an hour. And while my friend from Oklahoma makes very salient commentary regarding what might very well be a view of some note in our body politic, I don't deem it unwise or unnecessary to talk about lifting people out of poverty at any time during the course of our legislative business, understanding the rules and the fact that this would not have been a rule germane to the specific issue.

But it is germane to the families out there in America. It is germane to the people that are working and are still in poverty that may be lifted out of poverty if we were to have a $10.10-an-hour minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of the amendment in the RECORD along with extraneous material immediately prior to the vote on the previous question.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' and defeat the previous question, and I now yield back the balance of my time.

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

In closing, I would like to say that one of the basic functions of Congress is to fund the government, and this rule would begin the process for consideration for fiscal year 2015 of actually doing that function and doing it in an orderly way and appropriate way.

I am particularly pleased that the appropriations process has moved as well and as quickly as it has so far this year. To that, I give credit to my

friend, Chairman ROGERS, and my great friend, Ranking Member LOWEY. They have worked well in a bipartisan manner.

I want to also commend the chairman of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee. Mr. BISHOP is the ranking member, and Mr. CULBERSON is the chairman. I think they have done a wonderful job.

Frankly, I have had the opportunity to work with my good friend DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ in the legislative branch as the ranking member, and I am currently privileged to be the chairman. I think that has been a very productive relationship. I have no doubt we are going to have some contention in other bills, but these bills have really moved together in a bipartisan fashion, and I think given the allocations that we had, have been worked through in a very professional, workmanlike way.

Now, my friend from Florida did mention the syrupy debate, and I know that is not his style. I have had the privilege of serving with him on the Rules Committee not just in this Congress but in a previous Congress, and he is one of the best debaters on the floor, and I have no doubt on every occasion I have seen he always gives as good as he gets and makes his case quite well. But I have appreciated having the opportunity to have this exchange with him. Obviously, I would urge that my colleagues actually support the rule and the underlying legislation.

While the rule vote is a procedural vote, and it is not uncommon for us to basically have a partisan division, I suspect that when the underlying legislation actually reaches this floor on the MilCon bill, the VA bill, and on the legislative branch bill, we will have a great deal of bipartisanship. Certainly, I look forward to that vote. I look forward to the debate and discussion over those. But the first thing we have to do is pass the rule, so, again, I urge my colleagues to pass this.

The material previously referred to by Mr. HASTINGS of Florida is as follows:

AN AMENDMENT TO H. RES. 557 OFFERED BY MR. HASTINGS OF FLORIDA

At the end of the resolution, add the following new sections:

SEC. 5. Immediately upon adoption of this resolution the Speaker shall, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1010) to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. All points of order against provisions in the bill are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions. If the Committee of the Whole rises and reports that it has come to no resolution on the bill, then on the next legislative day the House shall, immediately after the third daily order of business under clause 1 of rule XIV, resolve into the Committee of the Whole for further consideration of the bill.

SEC. 6. Clause 1(c) of rule XIX shall not apply to the consideration of H.R. 1010.

THE VOTE ON THE PREVIOUS QUESTION: WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

This vote, the vote on whether to order the previous question on a special rule, is not merely a procedural vote. A vote against ordering the previous question is a vote against the Republican majority agenda and a vote to allow the Democratic minority to offer an alternative plan. It is a vote about what the House should be debating.

Mr. Clarence Cannon's Precedents of the House of Representatives (VI, 308–311), describes the vote on the previous question on the rule as ''a motion to direct or control the consideration of the subject before the House being made by the Member in charge.'' To defeat the previous question is to give the opposition a chance to decide the subject before the House. Cannon cites the Speaker's ruling of January 13, 1920, to the effect that ''the refusal of the House to sustain the demand for the previous question passes the control of the resolution to the opposition'' in order to offer an amendment. On March 15, 1909, a member of the majority party offered a rule resolution. The House defeated the previous question and a member of the opposition rose to a parliamentary inquiry, asking who was entitled to recognition. Speaker Joseph G. Cannon (R-Illinois) said: ''The previous question having been refused, the gentleman from New York, Mr. Fitzgerald, who had asked the gentleman to yield to him for an amendment, is entitled to the first recognition.''

The Republican majority may say ''the vote on the previous question is simply a vote on whether to proceed to an immediate vote on adopting the resolution . . . [and] has no substantive legislative or policy implications whatsoever.'' But that is not what they have always said. Listen to the Republican Leadership Manual on the Legislative Process in the United States House of Representatives, (6th edition, page 135). Here's how the Republicans describe the previous question vote in their own manual: ''Although it is generally not possible to amend the rule because the majority Member controlling the time will not yield for the purpose of offering an amendment, the same result may be achieved by voting down the previous question on the rule . . . When the motion for the previous question is defeated, control of the time passes to the Member who led the opposition to ordering the previous question. That Member, because he then controls the time, may offer an amendment to the rule, or yield for the purpose of amendment.''

In Deschler's Procedure in the U.S. House of Representatives, the subchapter titled ''Amending Special Rules'' states: ''a refusal to order the previous question on such a rule [a special rule reported from the Committee on Rules] opens the resolution to amendment and further debate.'' (Chapter 21, section 21.2) Section 21.3 continues: ''Upon rejection of the motion for the previous question on a resolution reported from the Committee on Rules, control shifts to the Member leading the opposition to the previous question, who may offer a proper amendment or motion and who controls the time for debate thereon.''

Clearly, the vote on the previous question on a rule does have substantive policy implications. It is one of the only available tools for those who oppose the Republican majority's agenda and allows those with alternative views the opportunity to offer an alternative plan.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on ordering the previous question.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, the Chair will reduce to 5 minutes the minimum time for any electronic vote on the question of adoption of the resolution.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 227, nays 189, not voting 15, as follows:

[Roll No. 184]

YEAS—227

Aderholt
Amash
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Byrne
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Cook
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Culberson
Daines
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Farenthold
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Hanna
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Holding
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jolly
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Lankford
Latham
Latta
LoBiondo
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Marchant
Marino
Massie
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (PA)
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Olson
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell

Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Royce
Runyan
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sanford
Scalise
Schock
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stewart
Stivers
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NAYS—189

Barber
Barrow (GA)
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Bera (CA)
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farr
Fattah
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Hahn
Hanabusa
Hastings (FL)
Heck (WA)
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Huffman
Israel
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Kirkpatrick
Kuster
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
Meng
Michaud
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Murphy (FL)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
O'Rourke
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Peterson
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NOT VOTING—15

Brown (FL)
Cicilline
Gutiérrez
Harper
Lewis
Meeks
Nolan
Nunnelee
Peters (MI)
Petri
Rangel
Richmond
Rohrabacher
Schwartz
Stockman

□ 1339

Messrs. MORAN, HIMES, TAKANO, and BARBER changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

So the previous question was ordered.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated against:

Mr. NOLAN. Mr. Speaker, had I been present and voting on rollcall vote No. 184 (Motion on Ordering the Previous Question on the Rule providing for consideration of H.R. 4486) I would have voted "no."

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 184 I was at a funeral in my district. Had I been present, I would have voted "no."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the resolution.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 3344

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to remove my name as a cosponsor from H.R. 3344.

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

There was no objection.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on consideration of H.R. 4486, and that I may include tabular material on the same.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 557 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 4486.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEBSTER) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1343

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 4486) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes, with Mr. WEBSTER of Florida in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is a real honor and a privilege for me to present the Veterans Affairs and Military Construction Appropriations bill to the House of Representatives with my good friend from Georgia, SANFORD BISHOP.

This is a bipartisan bill that we produced together with unanimous support of the committee and the subcommittee to ensure that our veterans and our men and women in uniform have everything that they need to do their job with complete peace of mind.

In fact, I often think of the job of this subcommittee as the peace of mind subcommittee, to be sure that our men and women in uniform have everything they need when it comes to their physical infrastructure and that, when they leave the services and go into the VA system, they have everything they need.

□ 1345

Making sure that our men and women in uniform have everything that they need and making sure that our veterans when they leave the service have the best possible medical care this country can provide is one of those fundamental functions of the government. We have an obligation as guardians of the Treasury and as good stewards of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars to ensure that this vital, core function of our Federal Government is fulfilled to our veterans and to our men and women in uniform.

In this appropriations bill, we have included $71.5 billion in discretionary funding, which is $1.8 billion less than last year and $398 million less than the budget request. We have provided the full budget request number of $6.6 billion for military construction projects, and while we have provided $1.8 billion less in fiscal year '14, we have included $64.7 billion in discretionary funding for the VA, which is about $1.5 billion more than last year. We have included an additional $20 million to get at the claims backlog and $17 million more than was requested for electronic medical records.

In this legislation, we are ensuring that we have continued strict oversight of the VA in their reporting requirements on the claims backlog. The length of time it takes veterans to receive the disability benefits that they have earned is just unacceptable, so Mr. BISHOP and I have included language in this bill to have very strict reporting requirements over which we will continue to exercise vigorous oversight in the months ahead at the VA to ensure that the claims backlog is reduced.

We are also introducing a mechanism here that we have found to be very, very effective in the case of electronic

health records. The VA and the Department of Defense are operating two completely different medical record systems that don't talk to each other. So, when you are in uniform in the Armed Forces and leave and go into the private sector and when the VA picks you up, the VA can't read your medical records. This is unacceptable. Since 2008, the Congress has had laws on the books that require the VA and the Department of Defense to have transparent, interoperable medical records that would be easily and quickly readable when a servicemember leaves the active service and goes into the VA system. Yet they are still not there, so we have in this bill a mechanism that says you are only going to get 25 percent of your money up front on implementing electronic health records until you come back to the committee and show us that you are meeting your obligation under the law to provide an immediate, seamless, and transparent transfer of your medical records from the Department of Defense to the VA.

In particular, I want to thank Chairman ROGERS for his support in this effort. He had a constituent of whom I am confident he will talk about in a minute—a young man in his district who really struck a chord with me. It is a tragic example of how unacceptable this is, that one agency can't read the medical records of the other. He is a young man who was injured. He lost his eyesight, I believe, Mr. Chairman, in Afghanistan. He had the vision in one eye lost, but had damage in the other eye. He still had some vision in the other eye, so when he left the service to go into the VA and when the VA needed to work on his other eye immediately in order to save his vision, the VA could not read the medical records provided to them by the Department of Defense. The doctors at the VA, understandably being cautious and concerned and being unable to read the records, didn't operate as quickly as they should have, and the young man lost his eyesight as a result of the medical records being unreadable by the VA. It is tragic, unacceptable, and utterly outrageous.

I am working closely with the chairman of the armed services Appropriations subcommittee. Chairman ROGERS has been terrifically helpful in this as has Ranking Member LOWEY and my good friend Mr. BISHOP from Georgia. We are working with the armed services subcommittee in Appropriations to put identical language in the bill so that the DOD is in the same boat.

You are going to have to earn your money. Prove to us that you are obeying the law, that you are fulfilling your obligation to our veterans and to our men and women in uniform, and then we will release the money. Follow the law and you will get your money. It works every time in the private sector. Certainly, I am confident that it is going to work here. I often think of the fact that I have been using an Apple Macintosh computer since they first came out in 1985. I never dreamed that you would be able to use a Windows operating system on a Macintosh computer, but, today, you can run Microsoft Word and other Windows programs on a Macintosh operating system. Surely, if Apple and Windows can work it out, the VA and the Department of Defense can as well. This bill ensures that that is going to happen. If they want to see the rest of their money, they are going to have to obey the law and get an interoperable, transparent medical records system in place.

Mr. Chairman, we have also limited the availability of construction funds in this bill to 5 years for hospitals that the VA builds so that the veterans don't have to wait endlessly for the completion of a hospital. I will never forget when I first got this marvelous assignment—I was assigned by Chairman ROGERS to handle this important bill—that the Denver hospital had $900 million, I believe, set aside, squirreled away in a hole. I don't think they had signed a contract or turned a spade of dirt, but they had $900 million squirreled away for years—that they had not used—in order to build that sorely needed hospital in Denver. That is just unacceptable.

This money that we are privileged to be stewards of was earned by our constituents by the sweat of their brow and their hard work, and it is our responsibility to ensure that the money is wisely spent, that it is spent to ensure that the law is enforced and, above all, that we do not spend any more than is absolutely necessary to fulfill the fundamental obligations of the United States Government. At the top of that list is to ensure that our veterans receive the medical care they have earned, that they receive the disability benefits in a timely fashion that they have earned, and that our men and women in uniform have all of the physical facilities they need to do their jobs with the peace of mind and the assurance that the United States Congress and the American taxpayers are right there with them, looking over their shoulders, to take care of them.

That is why this is the ''peace of mind'' committee, and it is a privilege for me to serve with my good friend from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP). So that my good friend Mr. BISHOP can address the House, I reserve the balance of my time.

Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2015 (H.R. 4486)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2014 Enacted	FY 2015 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
TITLE I - DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE					
Military construction, Army	1,104,875	539,427	526,427	-578,448	-13,000
Military construction, Navy and Marine Corps	1,629,690	1,018,772	998,772	-630,918	-20,000
Military construction, Air Force	1,052,796	811,774	719,551	-333,245	-92,223
Military construction, Defense-Wide	3,445,423	2,061,890	2,021,690	-1,423,733	-40,200
Total, Active components	7,232,784	4,431,863	4,266,440	-2,966,344	-165,423
Military construction, Army National Guard	314,740	126,920	126,920	-187,820	---
Military construction, Air National Guard	119,800	94,663	94,663	-25,137	---
Military construction, Army Reserve	156,560	103,946	103,946	-52,614	---
Military construction, Navy Reserve	29,000	51,528	51,528	+22,528	---
Military construction, Air Force Reserve	45,659	49,492	49,492	+3,833	---
Total, Reserve components	665,759	426,549	426,549	-239,210	---
Total, Military construction	7,898,543	4,858,412	4,692,989	-3,205,554	-165,423
North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program	199,700	199,700	199,700	---	---
Family housing construction, Army	27,408	78,609	78,609	+51,201	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Army	512,871	350,976	350,976	-161,895	---
Family housing construction, Navy and Marine Corps	73,407	16,412	16,412	-56,995	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Navy and Marine Corps	379,444	354,029	354,029	-25,415	---
Family housing construction, Air Force	76,360	---	---	-76,360	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Air Force	388,598	327,747	327,747	-60,851	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Defense-Wide	55,845	61,100	61,100	+5,255	---
Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund	1,780	1,662	1,662	-118	---
Total, Family housing	1,515,713	1,190,535	1,190,535	-325,178	---
Chemical demilitarization construction, Defense-Wide	122,536	38,715	38,715	-83,821	---
Department of Defense Base Closure Account	451,357	270,085	270,085	-181,272	---
Military Construction - fiscal year 2014 (Sec. 127)	---	---	125,000	+125,000	+125,000
Military Construction - fiscal year 2015 (Sec. 128)	---	---	245,000	+245,000	+245,000
Military Construction, Army (Sec. 129)	-200,000	---	-79,577	+120,423	-79,577
Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps (Sec.131)	-12,000	---	---	+12,000	---
Military Construction, Air Force	-39,700	---	---	+39,700	---
Military Construction, Defense-Wide	-14,000	---	---	+14,000	---
Military Construction, Air National Guard	-14,200	---	---	+14,200	---
42 USC 3374 (Sec. 131)	-99,949	---	-100,000	-51	-100,000
NATO Security Investment Program (Sec. 130)	---	---	-25,000	-25,000	-25,000
Total, title I, Department of Defense	9,808,000	6,557,447	6,557,447	-3,250,553	---
Appropriations	(10,187,849)	(6,557,447)	(6,762,024)	(-3,425,825)	(+204,577)
Rescissions	(-379,849)	---	(-204,577)	(+175,272)	(-204,577)
TITLE II - DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS					
Veterans Benefits Administration					
Compensation and pensions	71,476,104	78,687,709	78,687,709	+7,211,605	---
Readjustment benefits	13,135,898	14,761,862	14,761,862	+1,625,964	---
Veterans insurance and indemnities	77,567	63,257	63,257	-14,310	---
Veterans housing benefit program fund:					
(indefinite)	---	---	---	---	---
(Limitation on direct loans)	(500)	(500)	(500)	---	---
Administrative expenses	158,430	160,881	160,881	+2,451	---

Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2015 (H.R. 4486)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2014 Enacted	FY 2015 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
Vocational rehabilitation loans program account	5	10	10	+5	---
(Limitation on direct loans)	(2,500)	(2,877)	(2,877)	(+377)	---
Administrative expenses	354	361	361	+7	---
Native American veteran housing loan program account	1,109	1,130	1,130	+21	---
Total, Veterans Benefits Administration	84,849,467	93,675,210	93,675,210	+8,825,743	---
Veterans Health Administration					
Medical services:					
Advance from prior year	(43,557,000)	(45,015,527)	(45,015,527)	(+1,458,527)	---
Current year request	40,000	367,885	---	-40,000	-367,885
Advance appropriation, FY 2016	45,015,527	47,603,202	47,603,202	+2,587,675	---
Subtotal	45,055,527	47,971,087	47,603,202	+2,547,675	-367,885
Medical support and compliance:					
Advance from prior year	(6,033,000)	(5,879,700)	(5,879,700)	(-153,300)	---
Advance appropriation, FY 2016	5,879,700	6,144,000	6,144,000	+264,300	---
Subtotal	5,879,700	6,144,000	6,144,000	+264,300	---
Medical facilities:					
Advance from prior year	(4,872,000)	(4,739,000)	(4,739,000)	(-133,000)	---
Current year request	85,000	---	---	-85,000	---
Advance appropriation, FY 2016	4,739,000	4,915,000	4,915,000	+176,000	---
Subtotal	4,824,000	4,915,000	4,915,000	+91,000	---
Medical and prosthetic research	585,664	588,922	588,922	+3,258	---
Medical care cost recovery collections:					
Offsetting collections	-2,485,000	-2,456,000	-2,456,000	+29,000	---
Appropriations (indefinite)	2,485,000	2,456,000	2,456,000	-29,000	---
Subtotal	---	---	---	---	---
DoD-VA Joint Medical Funds (transfers out)	(-254,257)	(-269,366)	(-252,366)	(+1,891)	(+17,000)
DoD-VA Joint Medical Funds (by transfer)	(254,257)	(269,366)	(252,366)	(-1,891)	(-17,000)
DoD-VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund (Transfer out)	(-15,000)	(-15,000)	(-15,000)	---	---
DoD-VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund (by transfer)	(15,000)	(15,000)	(15,000)	---	---
Total, Veterans Health Administration	56,344,891	59,619,009	59,251,124	+2,906,233	-367,885
Appropriations	(710,664)	(956,807)	(588,922)	(-121,742)	(-367,885)
Advance appropriations, FY 2016	(55,634,227)	(58,662,202)	(58,662,202)	(+3,027,975)	---
Advances from prior year appropriations	(54,462,000)	(55,634,227)	(55,634,227)	(+1,172,227)	---
National Cemetery Administration					
National Cemetery Administration	250,000	256,800	256,800	+6,800	---
Departmental Administration					
General administration	327,591	321,591	321,591	-6,000	---
Board of Veterans Appeals	88,294	94,294	94,294	+6,000	---
General operating expenses, VBA	2,465,490	2,494,254	2,514,254	+48,764	+20,000
Information technology systems	3,703,344	3,903,344	3,870,552	+167,208	-32,792
Office of Inspector General	121,411	121,411	121,411	---	---
Construction, major projects	342,130	561,800	561,800	+219,670	---
Construction, minor projects	714,870	495,200	495,200	-219,670	---
Grants for construction of State extended care facilities	85,000	80,000	80,000	-5,000	---

Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2015 (H.R. 4486)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2014 Enacted	FY 2015 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
Grants for the construction of veterans cemeteries	46,000	45,000	45,000	-1,000	---
Total, Departmental Administration	7,894,130	8,116,894	8,104,102	+209,972	-12,792
Administrative Provisions					
Prior Year Rescissions (Sec. 233)	-182,000	---	-38,000	+144,000	-38,000
Section 225					
Medical services	1,400,000	1,400,000	1,400,000	---	---
(Rescission)	-1,400,000	-1,400,000	-1,400,000	---	---
Medical support and compliance	100,000	100,000	100,000	---	---
(Rescission)	-150,000	-100,000	-100,000	+50,000	---
Medical facilities	250,000	250,000	250,000	---	---
(Rescission)	-250,000	-250,000	-250,000	---	---
Total, Administrative Provisions	-232,000	---	-38,000	+194,000	-38,000
Total, title II	149,106,488	161,667,913	161,249,236	+12,142,748	-418,677
Appropriations	(95,454,261)	(104,755,711)	(104,375,034)	(+8,920,773)	(-380,677)
Rescissions	(-1,982,000)	(-1,750,000)	(-1,788,000)	(+194,000)	(-38,000)
Advance appropriations, FY 2016	(55,634,227)	(58,662,202)	(58,662,202)	(+3,027,975)	---
Advances from prior year appropriations	(54,462,000)	(55,634,227)	(55,634,227)	(+1,172,227)	---
(Limitation on direct loans)	(3,000)	(3,377)	(3,377)	(+377)	---
Discretionary	(64,416,919)	(68,155,085)	(67,736,408)	(+3,319,489)	(-418,677)
Advances from prior year less FY 2016 advances	-1,172,227	-3,027,975	-3,027,975	-1,855,748	---
Net discretionary	(63,244,692)	(65,127,110)	(64,708,433)	(+1,463,741)	(-418,677)
Mandatory	(84,689,569)	(93,512,828)	(93,512,828)	(+8,823,259)	---
Total mandatory and net discretionary	147,934,261	158,639,938	158,221,261	+10,287,000	-418,677
TITLE III - RELATED AGENCIES					
American Battle Monuments Commission					
Salaries and expenses	63,200	70,100	75,000	+11,800	+4,900
Foreign currency fluctuations account	14,100	1,900	1,900	-12,200	---
Total, American Battle Monuments Commission	77,300	72,000	76,900	-400	+4,900
U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims					
Salaries and expenses	35,408	31,386	31,386	-4,022	---
Department of Defense - Civil					
Cemeterial Expenses, Army					
Salaries and expenses	65,800	45,800	61,881	-3,919	+16,081
Armed Forces Retirement Home - Trust Fund					
Operation and maintenance	66,800	62,400	62,400	-4,400	---
Capital program	1,000	1,000	1,000	---	---
Total, Armed Forces Retirement Home	67,800	63,400	63,400	-4,400	---
Total, title III	246,308	212,586	233,567	-12,741	+20,981

Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, FY 2015 (H.R. 4486)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2014 Enacted	FY 2015 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
Grand total	159,160,796	168,437,946	168,040,250	+8,879,454	-397,696
Appropriations	(105,888,418)	(111,525,744)	(111,370,625)	(+5,482,207)	(-155,119)
Rescissions	(-2,361,849)	(-1,750,000)	(-1,992,577)	(+369,272)	(-242,577)
Advance appropriations, FY 2015	(55,634,227)	(58,662,202)	(58,662,202)	(+3,027,975)	---
Advances from prior year appropriations	(54,462,000)	(55,634,227)	(55,634,227)	(+1,172,227)	---
(By transfer)	(269,257)	(284,366)	(267,366)	(-1,891)	(-17,000)
(Transfer out)	(-269,257)	(-284,366)	(-267,366)	(+1,891)	(+17,000)
(Limitation on direct loans)	(3,000)	(3,377)	(3,377)	(+377)	---

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As you all know, this bill has a strong reputation for finding bipartisan common ground as members work together to fund the construction of military facilities and strive to improve the quality of life and the care afforded to our veterans and our military families. Once again, Chairman CULBERSON has continued this tradition. The bill before us provides funding levels that, I think, most Members on both sides of the aisle agree are appropriate while avoiding the contentious legislative riders that complicate passage.

I am pleased to join Chairman CULBERSON as the House takes up the fiscal year 2015 appropriations bill for Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies. The MilCon-VA bill is critically important to the strength and well-being of our military, our veterans, and the families who sacrifice so much to defend our country.

In working with Chairman CULBERSON and the members of the subcommittee, we have crafted a bill that will address the funding needs for military construction and family housing for our troops and their families as well as other quality-of-life construction projects. In addition, it will provide funding for many important VA programs as well as for agencies like the Veterans Court of Appeals and the American Battle Monuments Commission. The bill before us today touches every soldier, sailor, marine, and airman. In addition, this bill will also impact military spouses, their children, and every veteran who participates in VA programs.

I want to commend the chairman for his work. Together, we sat through hearings and gained valuable insight to the workings of all agencies under the subcommittee's jurisdiction. I also want to thank all of our subcommittee members and recognize them for their hard work in crafting this bill. I believe that the minority was treated fairly during this process, and I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON for ensuring this bipartisan result.

Chairman CULBERSON has already provided the funding highlights in the bill, so I won't repeat them all, but I will say this: In my opinion, the FY '15 bill adequately provides for the Department's priorities in military construction for each of the services. If the Department needed something, it is in the bill, and if it didn't need it, it is not in the bill. The Department of Veterans Affairs is funded at $64.7 billion, which is $1.8 billion above the '14 enacted level. Overall, the bill meets the discretionary budget request in all areas of administrative expenses, research, and facilities. In addition, the bill includes $58.7 billion in advances, which is the same as the budget request.

While I am pleased with the healthy funding increase for the VA, many constituents from my district are still extremely frustrated with the claims backlog. Frankly, I would have to agree. Now, while the VA has made some progress on lessening the backlog, there are still over 300,000 claims considered as backlogged, so I was pleased that an additional $20 million was included in the bill to assist the VA in making even more progress on the backlog. In addition, Mr. Chairman, it is my hope that coupling the Veterans Claims Intake Program with continued rigorous reporting requirements, while fully funding the Veterans Benefit Management System, will help the VA reach its goal to end this backlog in 2015.

On the issue of electronic medical records, you all know my frustration, and I could spend all of the time yielded to me just on this one topic, but I will say this: We have finally gotten the two Departments' attention, and I expect to see some real progress on this soon. The bill continues the practice of fencing money for this endeavor to make sure that when it is completed we have a system that works, and works well.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that we have a strong bipartisan bill that supports our military, their families, and our veterans, and I would hate to see the hard work of our committee upended by contentious, partisan riders intended to serve in scoring political points instead of those that serve our Nation. I also believe the most important things of this bill are the resources and accountability provided to assist the VA in tackling the claims backlog. So I say to my colleagues that our committee strongly shares the deep commitment of this body in fixing the claims backlog issue. We have looked at numerous approaches and firmly believe our bill has found the optimal approach in dealing with this pressing concern for our veterans.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, at this time, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Kentucky, Chairman ROGERS, the distinguished chairman of the full committee.

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the 2015 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill.

I am very happy to be on the floor with this bill today, Mr. Chairman, because it kicks off the 2015 appropriations cycle at a very early date. In fact, we know that this is the earliest in the year that our committee has presented a bill to the floor, at least since 1974, the date of the present Budget Act, and perhaps even more so beyond that. We just don't have the records for it. Nevertheless, it is a very early date. It also does the important work of providing funding for our military, infrastructure and for the care of our veterans.

This bill provides $71.5 billion in discretionary funding to meet those needs. Within that total, this bill provides $6.6 billion for military construction projects, family housing, medical units, education-training facilities. This will help make sure that the men and women of our Armed Forces have the quality of life that they deserve during their service and that they have the support that they need for our Nation's military missions.

The bill also provides a total of $64.7 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. That goes a long way toward fulfilling our commitments to our veterans, making sure that, in exchange for their service and their sacrifice, we will take care of their health and well-being. Of that money, $45 billion goes toward VA medical services, including funding for mental health care, suicide prevention, rural health initiatives, homeless veteran treatment, and job training. The bill also ensures that our benefit programs and health systems operate smoothly and efficiently.

□ 1400

This bill continues our committee's hard work to reduce the disability claims backlog, and demands that an interoperable Department of Defense-VA, the electronic health record system is up and running as soon as possible so that when a veteran goes to a VA hospital and the hospital medical people need access to Army records or DOD records when the soldier was injured, those records are available and compatible so that VA then can use those records to further the treatment of the soldier.

By providing increased funding for claims processing, continuing performance benchmarks to reduce the backlog, and placing conditions on funding for modernization of the VA health record system, we are sending a very strong message, Mr. Chairman, to that agency that we want these problems fixed, and we want them fixed now.

In total, the bill provides $1.8 billion less than last year, hard-and-fast proof that we can streamline this government and root out unnecessary spending without adversely affecting our troops and veterans. For example, less funding is provided to Military Construction accounts due to current price stability and a favorable bid climate, which saves taxpayer dollars but has no effect on quality of life or services for our troops.

Mr. Chairman, this bill is a model of bipartisanship that represents the good we can do by way of the appropriations process. That is, in most part, thanks to the subcommittee lead by my good chairman, JOHN CULBERSON, and his ranking member, Mr. BISHOP. They worked on a collaborative basis to produce a bill that truly fulfills the needs of our military and our veterans.

I want to take a moment too to thank the staff who all put in a great deal of hard work to get this bill before the House this early and at all.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, this is the first of 12 appropriations bills that

we must bring to the floor before the August recess. With an agreed-upon budget and early start, the cooperation of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle and ample floor time, I believe we can complete our work, our congressional duty, on time, on budget, and under regular order. I look forward to working with our colleagues to make this goal a reality.

I couldn't be prouder to kick off our 2015 appropriations bill season with this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support it fully.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. LOWEY), the ranking member of the full Appropriations Committee, a very, very, very eloquent and hardworking lady, and who is committed to the support of our veterans and their families.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank our distinguished chairman, Mr. CULBERSON, and the distinguished subcommittee ranking member, SANFORD BISHOP, who really have done an extraordinary job on this bill.

Since it is the first bill coming to the floor, I share the pride expressed by the big chairman, Chairman ROGERS. This is regular order, this is an outstanding bill, and we can be very proud of the work. So thank you again, Chairman CULBERSON, Ranking Member BISHOP, for this very, very important bill.

This is the first of the 12 spending bills that the House will consider for fiscal year 2015. As I mentioned, I am so pleased that we are beginning the process with a bill, as reported out of committee, that includes reasonable spending levels and is devoid of controversial riders. I hope this is a sign of what is to follow.

Despite fiscal constraints, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs bill would meet the needs of servicemen and servicewomen and continue to support our veterans. I am particularly pleased with the emphasis on the increased need for prosthetics for our female servicemembers.

Congress must continue to track and provide vigorous oversight, as you heard from Chairman ROGERS and Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP, on the VistA Evolution Electronic Health Record to ensure its capability and interoperability with whatever health records system the Department of Defense eventually selects. As we have discussed many times, this discussion has gone on much too long. It is time for closure, and it is time for coordination. I do hope that happens sooner, rather than later. The overall increase above the fiscal year 2014-enacted level to the IT account should help the VA move forward.

This bill also takes several steps to reduce the disgraceful veterans claims backlog. The committee has previously provided the VA with additional resources. This bill would provide $173.3 million to the Veterans Benefit Management System and an additional $20 million to the Veterans Benefit Administration for digital scanning of old paper files, the centralized mail initiative, and staff overtime.

It withholds 75 percent of the VistA Evolution funds until VA provides information on the system, particularly regarding planned interoperability with the DOD.

It will continue to require the VA to provide monthly records on claims processing and remediation efforts for underperforming regional offices.

The VA has made progress in the last year, and this bill provides the resources to end the claims backlog, and that is what we expect of the Secretary in 2015.

This is a good bill. I hope it is preserved as the House considers amendments. Mr. Chairman, I urge your support.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, if I could ask how much time do we have remaining in this part of the debate?

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas has 17 minutes remaining.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I have the pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN), the chairman of the Defense Subcommittee.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, as you have so well articulated, the Nation owes an almost unrepayable debt to our men and women in uniform, past and present. As a result of their selfless service, we are absolutely obliged to deliver a full range of benefits that they were promised. That includes quality medical care for members of the military and our veterans at all times.

My colleagues, I want to commend the gentleman from Texas, the ranking member from Georgia, and their staff for their commitment to ensuring that there will be a seamless transition from the Defense medical system into the VA health care system through an integrated electronic medical record.

For nearly a decade, your subcommittee and our Defense Subcommittee have listened to a parade of administration officials tell us, first of all, they recognized the need for interoperability when it comes to electronic health records and, secondly, that we are on it. Mr. Chairman, they were not on it, and as a result, we have lost years as the VA and the Department of Defense struggled to develop either a single unified record or different but interoperable systems.

My colleagues, the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 mandated the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs were required to collaborate to create an electronic health record that would achieve interoperability and streamline the transition process from servicemember to veteran. Now, 7 years later, there is no interoperable record, and the original plan for the two Departments to use the same system has now been scrapped. The Department of Defense plans to acquire a new record system while the VA continues to upgrade its current one. Alternatively, the acquisition program for the Department of Defense has an estimated contract award date of the third quarter of fiscal year 2015 with initial operating capability by the first quarter of fiscal year 2017, nearly a full decade after the initial mandate.

My colleagues, this program has been plagued by inefficiency, poor planning, and apparently even less oversight by responsible members of the Department. The failure to make the significant progress on this issue is a national disgrace.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CULBERSON. I yield the gentleman such time as he may consume.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Thank you for yielding the time.

The failure to make significant progress on this issue is a national disgrace. Not only are the Departments squandering precious taxpayer dollars, but above all, our troops and veterans are suffering as they seek help.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you on this situation to end this debacle. It is inexcusable. We need interoperable records. We need the VA and the Department of Defense to work together successfully to serve our veterans.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), who has offered invaluable help on the committee in crafting the bill and who has a particular interest in the Defense Language School in Monterey and on maintaining our commitment to previous BRAC rounds in the State of California that they not be forgotten.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Chair, thank you very much, Ranking Member BISHOP and Chairman CULBERSON.

I rise as the longest serving member on this subcommittee, and I want to commend you both, the chairman and the ranking member, for your hard work in ensuring that this bill is another significant step in fulfilling our promise to our country that has made these commitments to our veterans that we will leave none of them behind.

This committee has a strong history of working in a bipartisan way to produce a bill that supports our Active Duty servicemembers, our veterans, and their families, and I think this bill is no exception to that.

For example, the VA has taken steps to rectify the deplorable backlog of benefit claims as everyone has mentioned so far. We owe it to our veterans to exercise our constitutional oversight responsibilities to ensure that the VA is actually fixing that backlog.

I am pleased the bill before us today includes language I requested with many of my colleagues that continues additional oversight requirements for the Veterans Benefits Administration and requires regular updates from the VA to Congress on the status of the backlog. Through regular updates from

the VA, we will be able to ensure accountability that will ultimately end the backlog.

Additionally, I am pleased to see the bill recognize that the VA must be able to employ enough mental health providers. For example, as it currently stands, 95 percent of the marriage and family therapists in California, licensed in California, are barred from VA employment under current VA standards, which require a degree from only one specified national accreditation program.

I authored language in the report of the bill, accompanying the bill, to ensure that the VA explore expanding the accreditation requirements by looking at those that are recognized by the Department of Education so that more marriage and family therapists can get to work helping our veterans.

As a final note, I would like to point out that this bill is $1.8 billion below last year's enacted level, but it is only $0.4 billion less than what the President requested.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I yield the gentleman 10 seconds.

Mr. FARR. Thank you.

I am glad to see this bill has been protected from senseless budget cuts. I strongly encourage this Congress to honor the balanced approach that this bill shows in the bipartisan Budget Control Act that we adopted last year.

□ 1415

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, at this time it is my privilege to yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Alabama (Mrs. ROBY), a member of our subcommittee who does a superb job representing her constituents.

Mrs. ROBY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, there is no greater duty that we have as a Nation than to care for our veterans. I am so proud to stand in support of this bill funding critical VA needs like medical care, medical health services, suicide prevention, traumatic brain injury treatment, homeless services, and job training.

One way I believe that we can greatly improve VA services is to further develop the Patient-Centered Community Care program. Some services veterans need aren't always offered at their local VA hospital, or, if they are, the waiting list may be really long. In these cases, it only makes sense for the VA to contract out services through local providers and get the veteran patients the care that they need. And offering better care to veterans while saving taxpayer money is a win-win situation.

Our committee report for this bill asks the Department of Veterans Affairs to document the successes and efficiencies of Patient-Centered Community Care so we can make the case for allowing more veterans to take advantage of this innovative program.

I strongly support this bill.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, at this time I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR), a strong member of the Appropriations Committee and a tireless fighter for our military veterans and their families.

Mr. CUELLAR. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the chairman, my friend from Texas, JOHN CULBERSON, and I certainly want to thank our ranking member, Mr. BISHOP. These two gentlemen are true models of what bipartisanship is here in Congress. They have really done a great job to show the American public that when it comes to veterans and the military, this is not a Democratic or a Republican issue, but it is an issue that we all work together. So I certainly want to thank them.

I want to thank them for the work that they have done, but in particular I want to thank both gentleman and the committee about an issue dealing with the backlogs that have existed at the VA for many years.

Veterans of all generations deserve a benefit system that is easy to navigate and is responsive to their needs.

As of April 26, 2014, the VA claims totaled more than 596,000. Of those, 319,000 have been pending for more than 125 days. This is something that has to be cleared. And this is something that Congress is working on.

While Congress has done some work, more has to be done. We need to make sure that in this appropriations bill we not only provide the bureaucrats, with all due respect, with the money, but they have to be provided the oversight and the performance measures to make sure that, if they are given the money, they get to work and eliminate this backlog that has been affecting so many veterans in my district and across the State and the Nation.

So I want to thank the members of the Appropriations Committee for supporting the VA's Veterans Benefit Management System so old claims that are filed on paper can now be converted to digital files to make then more accessible and more searchable.

I also want to thank them for the money for VA employees' overtime so we can end the backlog by 2015. We have to get this job done.

Finally, the last point that I want to make that is extremely important is to make sure that we get the VA and the Department of Defense to create one electronic health records system.

Why is it that the Department of Defense has their own records, and once a veteran retires, the VA has a different record? We have to get them together so they can work together to make sure that we have the right paperwork filed and we speed up claims and the process between the VA and the Department of Defense, working together.

So, in conclusion, these two gentlemen and the members have been a true model of bipartisanship. I think we need to salute them. If we look at the work that Mr. BISHOP and Mr. CULBERSON have done here, this is the way we get our job done in Congress in a bipartisan way.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, can I ask how much time we have remaining?

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas has 12½ minutes remaining.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I want to be sure to acknowledge and thank my friend, Mr. CUELLAR, from Laredo. We have been good friends and served together in the Texas House. I am sure he remembers the appropriations committee in the Texas House. And we understand the value of the power of the purse.

We are indeed using the power of the purse to achieve the goals that Mr. CUELLAR has just mentioned, that is, ensuring the claims backlog is dealt with and that the Department of Defense and the VA have an interoperable medical record.

There really is no more powerful check and balance that the legislative branch has over the executive branch than the power of the purse, which originates in the House.

Article 1, section 9 says that no money may be drawn from the Treasury, except by appropriations.

We are working together arm-in-arm, just as we did in the Texas House, in support of our veterans and military.

In fact, we also have found great common ground when it comes to law enforcement on the border, something that his folks in Laredo have a keen interest in: safe streets, good schools, a strong economy. And that all begins with law enforcement.

I want to thank the gentleman from Laredo because it has been a pleasure working with him on so many of these good issues.

We could have not gotten to this spot, Mr. Chairman, without the help of the committee staff. We have got an extraordinary group of people who have made this possible. The Appropriations Committee is blessed to have had professionals here who have helped us for years.

I want to particularly thank Donna Shabazz, Sue Quantius, and Sarah Young, and make sure that we also recognize the extraordinary contributions by Matt Washington and Tracey Russell.

This has really been a team effort. It is an extraordinary complex piece of legislation to ensure that not only the money that our taxpayers have worked so hard to earn is wisely spent, but that the agencies that are the beneficiaries of these hard-earned tax dollars understand that with the receipt of this money comes the obligation to ensure that it is spent wisely. We are going to continue with aggressive oversight.

When it comes to oversight, Mr. Chairman, I also want to mention that

we are going to have an amendment later today by the Congresswoman from Phoenix to deal with this really deeply concerning situation that we have seen arise in the Phoenix VA where you have got a doctor claiming that folks have lost their lives. They were unable to get access to the medical care they have earned from their medical service at the Phoenix hospital.

That is another way to enforce the law. With additional funding, we are going to use the inspector general's office to investigate this and find out what is actually going on. In that case, if there has been deliberate or intentional refusal to admit veterans to the VA hospital in Phoenix, there are going to be criminal charges.

Certainly, our heart goes out to those families in Phoenix. We are all committed to make sure that any veteran, any member of the military who has served this country, has immediate access to the best medical care in the world.

And that is why this is such a bipartisan bill and one that we offer to the House today, arm-in-arm. Both the gentleman from Georgia and the people of Texas that I represent were pleased to present this to the House and encourage the Members to support it.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ), the ranking member of our Legislative Branch Subcommittee on Appropriations and a strong voice for the needs of our Nation's veterans, with a unique interest in the needs of our female servicemembers and veterans.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I appreciate the gentleman yielding.

First, let me commend and pile on to the commendations that are so deserving by our colleagues and my good friends, Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP, on crafting a strong and bipartisan bill. Congress really can work together when we put our heads and our hearts together.

Let me especially recognize their leadership in including language in the bill which will help many of our Nation's veterans transition into careers in civilian health care.

The United States military has the best-trained medics and corpsmen in the world. In fact, the data substantiates that Special Forces medics greatly increase the chances of survival for those who suffer injuries on the battlefield.

Despite this, former military medics have one of the highest unemployment rates among veterans because their extensive medical training in the military doesn't perfectly match qualifications in the civilian world.

For example, Army Specialist Nick Colgin, whom President Obama applauded as an American hero for saving the life of a French soldier shot in Afghanistan, was somehow considered unqualified to be an emergency medical technician in Wyoming.

This Military Construction-Veterans Affairs bill that we are considering can help fix this baffling disconnect. It includes language establishing a pilot program for veteran medics that will expand opportunities for physician assistant training at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This program will leverage the expertise of military medics to strengthen the health care profession and reduce veteran unemployment.

A perfect example of the way veteran medics can, when given the chance, successfully enter into a civilian health care profession is the story of Staff Sergeant Victor Arvizu, who valiantly served for 20 years as a combat medic in the Middle East and South Pacific.

From taking blood samples to pulling out shards of glass from the chests of soldiers to suturing wounds and inserting chest tubes, Sergeant Arvizu developed a special skill set that translated into a successful career when he returned home.

Sergeant Arvizu was able to use this expertise to gain employment as a health tech at a Veterans Affairs clinic in my south Florida district. But there are too many veterans in my district and nationwide who are still struggling to translate their expertise and skills into employment in the civilian workforce.

We need initiatives that will create more stories like Sergeant Arvizu's.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I yield the gentlelady an additional 30 seconds.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you.

Our veterans make the ultimate sacrifice for our country, and now we need to do our part by providing them with opportunities to use their skill sets. I am proud that this bill includes language that will help to do just that.

I urge support of the bill.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, at this time I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE).

Ms. LEE of California. Mr. Chair, let me first thank our ranking member for his tireless leadership on behalf of our veterans and as our ranking member on the MilCon Subcommittee.

I also want to thank our chairman for working with us once again to include language in this bill that would require the VA to provide detailed reporting on the unacceptable claims backlog and its efforts to eliminate it.

Congresswoman JACKIE SPEIER and myself, for example, have been working with our veterans in the Bay area. Some of the stories and some of the cases that we have uncovered, discovered, and worked on are heartbreaking. I know Members throughout the country have many veterans whose benefits should have been provided and executed many, many years ago.

In order to reduce the veterans' benefit claims backlog, this bill fully funds the President's budget request of $173 million for the Veterans Benefits Management System and provides an additional $20 million to the Veterans Benefits Administration for records and staffing needs.

As the daughter of a veteran and the Representative of thousands of veterans in my district, I am deeply troubled to hear that young men and women who serve our country must wait an average of 255 days while the VA processes their claims. This wait is inexcusable and unacceptable. We have heard some of the tragic, tragic stories that have arisen out of this.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, let me just say I am very pleased that the House is moving quickly and in regular order to consider the Military Construction and VA Appropriations bill. It is my hope that this will continue as we move forward in the appropriations process with all of our subcommittees.

As a member of the Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee, it is my hope that our subcommittee, which is the largest share of funding outside of the Pentagon, will receive a proportionate and adequate increase in our total allocation.

Our subcommittee supports programs that impact nearly every household, every community, and every congressional district, and so we owe it to our constituents to have a full, open, and robust debate as the process moves forward.

Thank you to our chair and ranking member on behalf of all of the veterans in my district. I will support this bill. It is a step forward in our appropriations process.

Mr. CULBERSON. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1430

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, this is a good bill. It is a bipartisan bill, and it is a bill that, I think, meets the needs of our services for their military construction, as well as for our veterans and our military families.

As far as our military construction, if our services needed it, it is in the bill. If they didn't need it, it is not in the bill.

I am so happy that we have taken very strong steps to address the claims backlog at the Veterans Administration. We have taken strong steps to ensure that we will soon have coordinated, interoperable electronic health records between the Veterans Affairs Department and the Department of Defense; and I am happy that in this bill, together, we will assure accountability for our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Chairman, when our men and women took the oath to serve our

country as part of our Nation's military, they took an oath to serve and defend; and when they completed that service, our Nation has, in fact, figuratively, written a check assuring that they will have the benefits that they need when they come back following their service.

It is our duty as a Nation, our duty as a Congress, and certainly our duty as a part of this committee, to make sure that that check that we figuratively wrote to those veterans never, ever comes back marked ''insufficient funds'' and to make sure that that check—the benefits of that check don't come back redeemed in a delayed fashion.

So we have done what is necessary to make sure that they get their benefits, that they get them in a timely manner, that the claims backlog is eliminated, and that we facilitate whatever it takes to make sure that they are rewarded for their service to our country because the price of freedom, it is not free.

Somebody had to pay that price, and the people who paid the price are the men and women who served our Nation in uniform and are now veterans and their families who also sacrificed as the servicemembers went to war.

I urge the adoption of this bill and ask my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I join Mr. BISHOP in urging the House to approve this legislation, and I agree with him wholeheartedly about making sure that any check—any check that our veterans have earned doesn't ever come back with insufficient funds.

It is one of the fundamental obligations of the Federal Government to ensure that our veterans are taken care of, they are given everything they need while they serve and they are in uniform, but then also that they are given access to the best medical care the country can provide to them once they enter into the private sector.

We have, in this legislation, given everything that the veterans have asked us for. We have made sure that the VA is fully funded, but we are using the power of the purse to ensure that the law is obeyed. We are making sure that our constituents' hard-earned tax dollars are spent wisely and frugally and carefully and that they actually reach the veterans who need them the most.

We are in an extraordinary era, Mr. Chairman. Survival rates are higher than they have ever been for our men and women in uniform. If they are lucky enough to survive their initial injury and make it to an aid station, the survival rate is in excess of 98, 99 percent.

It is absolutely extraordinary, the blessings of modern medicine. The work that the VA has been doing in prosthetics and helping these young men and women recover from their injuries is extraordinary.

This is our first obligation as a government, is to ensure that the men and women who make it possible for us to be here in a free society and debate legislation like this, that they are given everything that they have earned by their service to the country.

An important part of this is to be sure that we are also talking to our constituents about the budget problems that lie ahead of us and the importance of making sure that the social safety net, the social safety net that is out there—Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid—those programs remain solvent.

They are, right now, headed into bankruptcy, and we have got to make sure that we deal with those bigger problems for the longer term, so that we can continue to fully fund the needs of our veterans and our men and women in uniform.

It truly has been a privilege for me to work on this subcommittee with my friend from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP). The State of Georgia and the State of Texas—I feel a special kinship with the people of Georgia because they have a commitment to the military that is commensurate to that of the people of Texas.

We both admire our men and women in uniform immensely, and this is a piece of legislation that our folks back home, Mr. Chairman, may not see much disagreement, but that is because we are, all of us, so strongly in support of making sure that our men and women in uniform can focus on their mission and protect this Nation with complete peace of mind.

I urge all the Members of the House to support this legislation which is presented to them by the unanimous vote of the subcommittee and the full committee.

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

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Chair, I move to strike the last word.

To the veterans who courageously served our country, we owe the best our nation can offer.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand here with my colleagues, working in a bipartisan manner to pass H.R. 4486, the Military Construction and Veteran Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015.

Thank you to Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP from the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs for your hard work in crafting this legislation.

This bill, in part, provides funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, and gives much needed support and resources to help the VA end the claims backlog.

We owe our veterans every promise we've made, and unfortunately, we've not been living up to these promises.

One of the pledges we make to our veterans is that, should they be injured during their service, we'll provide them with disability compensation to assist them as they transition home.

While the VA is making strides to reduce the claims backlog, more needs to be done.

Unfortunately, there remains a large claims backlog at many VA Regional Offices across the United States.

At the Oakland Regional Office, which serves my constituents in the 15th Congressional District of California, over 58 percent of claims have been pending for over 125 days.

These numbers are among the worst in the nation, with claims averaging over one full year to complete.

As a former prosecutor I am well acquainted with phrase ''justice delayed is justice denied.''

In the case of the veterans' claims, delayed care is denied care.

Unfortunately, since the retirement of Director Douglas Bragg in January, the Oakland Regional Office director position has been vacant.

I led a bipartisan letter signed by 19 California Members of Congress to the VA urging it to swiftly reduce the backlog by hiring a new, supremely qualified director of the Oakland VA.

Properly serving our veterans means listening to their concerns and taking action.

I've hosted several veteran town halls, where veterans across the East Bay shared their stories and ongoing struggles regarding pending claims at the VA.

My office is working hard to help every veteran in our district that needs assistance, but the problem goes beyond just one district, region, or state.

That's why we're here today. We're working to ensure that we reach every veteran that needs assistance and hold the VA accountable for its slow claims process.

Our veterans desperately need a VA that will provide both accurate and timely responses. It's what our veterans deserve, and I'll continue to push the VA to provide our veterans with the service and benefits they've earned.

Not only is there a backlog in first-time claims, now the backlog for appeals is becoming a serious problem.

I appreciate that language I supported along with other Members of the California delegation was included in the committee report on the bill to address this appeals backlog. It expresses our deep concern over this issue and encourages the Veterans Benefits Administration to take swift action to lower the wait time for appeals claims.

Thanks again to the Chairman and Ranking Member for accepting this language.

I'll continue working closely with my colleagues to ensure that the few that proudly served our country receive the benefits and care they earned.

Mr. NOLAN. Mr. Chair, I move to strike the last word.

Where I come from, we believe that for those who we send into harm's way to protect and serve us in defense of our freedoms, we have a profound obligation to protect and serve them upon their return.

Last year's Military Construction and Veterans Administration bill did not do enough to fulfill this promise. Therefore I'm glad that this bill is an improvement.

This year's bill: increases funding for vital veterans programs here at home by $1.5 billion; significantly decreases unnecessary new military construction projects in places all around the world—new projects that the Pentagon itself says are not wanted and not needed; this bill comes closer to fully funding veterans mental health programs; as well as vital health care programs for the more than 3 million veterans living in rural communities; increases funding for technology to reduce the notorious backlog at the VA.

Mr. Chair, I rise specifically today to bring to light my grave concerns with the Regional Command-Southwest Command and Control facility in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan.

This facility offers 64,000 square feet of space for more than 1,000 military personnel, including accommodations for a three-star general.

Standing two stories tall, this windowless facility is larger than a football field, and was completed in 2013 at a cost of approximately $34 million.

According to Special Inspector General to Afghanistan John Sopko, this building is the ''Taj Mahal'' of command centers.

The unconscionable fact about this building, however—is that the military has no plans to use it.

Area commanders insisted three years ago that they did not need this building. They were in the middle of troop withdrawal, and they saw no reason to move in.

In Mr. Sopko's words, ''this is an example of what is wrong with military construction in general—once a project is started, it is very difficult to stop.''

Mr. Chair, we simply cannot allow any projects like this—projects that the Pentagon itself says are unnecessary—to receive funding from this Congress. It's shameful, it's wasteful, and it needs to stop.

American veterans of foreign wars like Afghanistan are sleeping under bridges—going without the life-saving health care and mental health services they deserve and so desperately need—and waiting for sometimes years for the VA to finally process their benefits claims.

Yet, during last year's debate on this bill, Republicans in the House rejected my amendment that would have doubled funding for veterans hospitals—and would have provided for extra personnel to address this atrocious backlog.

It is simply unconscionable that we allow this to go on while literally throwing billions of dollars away on buildings standing empty overseas.

Where is the outcry in this House? Where is the shock—where is the shame?

It is time we end these unsustainable wars of choice. It is time we cut back on our military footprint in unnecessary outposts around the world. It is time we prioritize those brave men and women whom we send into harm's way to protect us.

When it comes to these brave men and women, we must do everything in our power—we must leave no stone unturned to assure our nation's veterans have the very best medical care—counseling—housing—job training—and all the educational opportunities a grateful nation can provide.

Only the very best is good enough. That is how we keep our promise to our nation's veterans.

In closing, Mr. Chair, once again I commend those of us in the House who have fought for increases to veterans programs here at home, and for those of us in the House who are dedicated to ending these costly and terrible wars abroad.

And I strongly urge you and all my colleagues in the House of Representatives to continue to give veterans the benefits they so rightfully deserve now and in the future.

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Chair, I rise today to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for including legislative language I requested in this year's Military Construction, Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015. It appears in section 232, as follows:

SEC. 232. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to award a contract to any contractor if the past performance of the contractor resulted in the completion of a construction project at a facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs more than 24 months after the original agreed-upon completion date for the project.

This language also exists as a stand-alone bill I have introduced, H.R. 4394: the 'Serve Our Heroes Now Act'. What it means is this—if someone is responsible for a delay of two years, or more, of completion of a VA facility, they cannot awarded future contracts for military or VA construction.

In my own district, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (''VA'') is building a new VA Medical Center (''VAMC'') that will serve an area of more than 90,000 veteran patients in East Central Florida. This VAMC will be one of seven members of the VISN 8 Healthcare System, covering parts of Florida, Georgia, and all of Puerto Rico.

The original construction contract for the Orlando VAMC called for a final completion date of October 2, 2012. Eighteen months later, my constituents, who bravely fought for their country, are still waiting. This is a disgrace, and it must be remedied.

Section 232 is clear. If the current contractor for the Orlando VAMC is determined to be at fault for construction delays, it will be ineligible for future contracts awarded from funds appropriated by this bill. That hurts—but it doesn't compare to the pain my constituents suffer while waiting for the VA Medical Center that has been promised to them.

In closing, Mr. Chair, I want every Member here, and anyone else watching, to know that I will request this language in every Military Construction, Veteran Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act that comes to this floor, as long as I serve in this body. Those responsible will be held accountable. I pray other veterans do not have to wait as long as my constituents have, and I pray that the new Orlando VAMC is fully operational by October of this year.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Chair, as we consider H.R. 4486, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, it is crucial that we protect American workers from any efforts to weaken or repeal the provisions under Davis-Bacon or the use of project labor agreements (PLAs) in federally funded or assisted construction projects.

The Davis-Bacon Act is used to set fair wage rates and benefits that contractors or subcontractors must use to compensate their laborers during the construction, alteration, or repair of public buildings. Project labor agreements are collective bargaining agreements used to establish the terms and conditions of employment for specific construction projects. Both are important tools in ensuring that American workers receive fair pay and treatment for federal contract work, and that taxpayer dollars are being used effectively during public construction projects.

H.R. 4486 must not be used as the vehicle to strip American workers of their rights to fair pay and treatment for federal contract work. The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act should remain about funding critical infrastructure projects in support of our national defense, and to bring reliable benefits and medical care to our men and women in uniform.

Mr. Chair, any efforts to weaken the Davis-Bacon Act will only serve to harm American taxpayers and workers. The provisions under Davis-Bacon and specific PLAs are used to ensure that federal dollars are used responsibly and effectively when building up our nation's infrastructure. Davis-Bacon and PLAs bring needed oversight to federal contract work, while preserving fair compensation for workers. I urge my colleagues to oppose any amendments to H.R. 4486 that would weaken these protections.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chair may accord priority in recognition to a Member offering an amendment who has caused it to be printed in the designated place in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Those amendments will be considered read.

The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4486

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes, namely:

TITLE I

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Army as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Army Corps of Engineers and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, and for construction and operation of facilities in support of the functions of the Commander in Chief, $526,427,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed $51,127,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, architect and engineer services, and host nation support, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Army determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, naval installations, facilities, and real property for the Navy and Marine Corps as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Naval Facilities Engineering Command and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, $998,772,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed $33,366,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Navy

determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Air Force as currently authorized by law, $719,551,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed $10,738,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Air Force determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: *Provided further*, That none of the funds provided under this heading for military construction in Europe as identified in the table entitled ''Military Construction'' in the accompanying report may be obligated or expended until the Department of Defense completes a European Consolidation Study.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. CASTOR OF FLORIDA

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 3, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert ''(increased by $9,800,000)''.

Page 11, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert ''(reduced by $9,800,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for all of their hard work and the committee, all of your work on behalf of America's servicemembers and veterans to ensure that they have the military facilities that they deserve.

I am very heartened to see the Congress, on both sides of the aisle, working together to ensure that our military families and servicemembers and our veterans have every resource they need to be successful.

My amendment proposes to transfer $9.8 million to the Air Force construction account from the BRAC account to really highlight an area in military construction and our facilities that needs a little bit of extra attention because I think we can all agree that it is important to ensure that, after our servicemembers serve in hazardous areas across the globe, when they return to the United States and our military installations, that those installations are clean and safe and secure as well.

Mr. Chairman, I have the privilege of representing MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. MacDill is led by the 6th Air Mobility Wing, but has a host of very important tenants on the base, including United States Central Command, United States Special Operations Command, the 927th Air Refueling Wing, and the Joint Communication Support Element. In fact, at MacDill, we have 39 mission support partners, so it is a very busy base.

I wanted to bring to everyone's attention a deficiency in our mission support facility. Think about this big active base with all of these tenants, 13,000 military and civilian personnel at MacDill. Add on to that 170,000 military retirees in the area.

They all come to the mission support facility to get credentialed and to take care of the very most basic credentialling and security processes at the base.

Our mission support facility is far from the main gate. It is way too small, but most seriously, it contains black mold. It is on the first floor along the walls.

Tampa, of course, is a very damp place, a very humid place, and if you don't take care and maintain these facilities, it causes very expensive problems down the road. They are doing the best they can, but it is very difficult to keep up.

I raise this issue because this has occurred at other military installations before, with the black mold. There was Hampton Roads in Virginia, in military housing and, most notoriously, the Walter Reed building 18, where we had wounded soldiers.

Now, thankfully, through the efforts of the Congress, many of these have been dealt with, but I think it is very important that the Air Force maintain a critical eye on these establishments, to make sure that they are up to standard for our military families.

So I wanted to raise awareness of this matter to the Air Force, to the committee members, and I do hope that you all will work with me to address this critical issue at MacDill Air Force Base and other substandard military facilities across America.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, at this time, I would just like to commend the gentlelady for raising a very, very important issue to the health, safety, and welfare of airmen and those who go to MacDill; and I want to assure the gentlelady that the chairman and I will work very closely to make sure that that issue is addressed.

It is our hope that the gentlelady will withdraw her amendment and that we can work on it together, but I assure the gentlelady that we will work together to make sure that that is a safe environment, a healthy environment, so that no one will be exposed to the consequences of black mold.

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

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that my amendment be withdrawn, and I thank the committee for their attention.

The CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, DEFENSE-WIDE

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, installations, facilities, and real property for activities and agencies of the Department of Defense (other than the military departments), as currently authorized by law, $2,021,690,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That such amounts of this appropriation as may be determined by the Secretary of Defense may be transferred to such appropriations of the Department of Defense available for military construction or family housing as the Secretary may designate, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes, and for the same time period, as the appropriation or fund to which transferred: *Provided further*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $122,240,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Defense determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: *Provided further*, That none of the funds provided under this heading for military construction in Europe as identified in the table entitled ''Military Construction'' in the accompanying report may be obligated or expended until the Department of Defense completes a European Consolidation Study: *Provided further*, That of the amount appropriated, notwithstanding any other provision of law, $37,918,000 shall be available for payments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the planning, design, and construction of a new North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MR. TURNER

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 4, line 19, insert after the dollar amount the following: ''(reduced by $20,000,000)(increased by $20,000,000)''.

Page 5, line 3, insert after the dollar amount the following: ''(increased by $20,000,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for their hard work and dedication to ensure that we have a great bill for our vets and men and women in uniform, but also for their tenacity.

I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON for his efforts and working with me on this amendment and also Ranking Member BISHOP.

Today, I rise in support of an amendment to provide funding for the planning, design, and construction of an additional missile defense site capable of protecting the homeland from a long-range ballistic missile attack.

To date, two Presidents, as well as three Secretaries of Defense have recognized the advantage of an additional missile defense site in order to provide additional protection against a long-

range ballistic missile threat from regions like the Middle East.

As you may be aware, we currently possess only two sites, both located on the west coast, limiting our ability to target and intercept incoming ICBMs.

Since 2007, the United States Northern Command, the combatant command in charge of defending the homeland, has, on numerous occasions, recommended the construction of an east coast site for this purpose.

Just last year, in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee—and, again, in testimony this year—General Jacoby, the U.S. Northern commander stated, ''The third site, if you built it, would give us better weapons access, it would give us increased inventory and increased battle space with regards to a threat coming from the direction of the Middle East.''

As China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea push for more advance launch vehicles, the construction of an east coast site will dramatically improve the ability of our military to intercept incoming threats by increasing the opportunity to engage and defeat those threats.

With the 2009 cancellation of the missile defense site in Poland, coupled with an increased threat environment, it is imperative that we continue to act to protect the homeland from the long-range ballistic missile threat.

Thank you for your consideration to this amendment. I want to, again, thank Chairman CULBERSON for his leadership in protecting our men and women in uniform, our national security, and our veterans.

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

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I want to rise in strong support of this amendment, and I thank my colleague from Georgia for working with us and making sure that we get this done.

We are long overdue for an antiballistic missile site in the continental United States, here on the east coast in particular.

My good friend from Ohio (Mr. TURNER) is absolutely right. We face an increased threat environment. That is putting it mildly.

The North Koreans, who are still at war with us—we are only under an armistice in North Korea. The North Koreans have demonstrated that they actually have a nuclear weapon in hand.

Visual satellite observers—I am an amateur astronomer, and as a member of a group of amateur observers of artificial satellites, one of the members of our network actually observed and tracked the North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile overflying the United States December 12 of 2012.

□ 1445

That is the first time the North Koreans had demonstrated the ability to actually fly an intercontinental ballistic missile payload over the United States. That missile flew over Pensacola, Florida, Mr. Chairman. It came up from the south and flew over the southeastern United States and exited the United States over Michigan. So the North Koreans have already demonstrated they have got the ability to deliver a nuclear weapon to the United States. So it is imperative that we move immediately to design and build an antiballistic missile site on the east coast of the United States.

I want to compliment my good friend from Ohio for bringing us this amendment, and it is my privilege to support it. I urge the adoption of the amendment and urge the Department of Defense to build this antiballistic missile site as fast as humanly possible.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Georgia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chair, I join the chairman in accepting this amendment. I commend the gentleman for offering it, and I think that our national defense will certainly be enhanced by the adoption of this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TURNER).

The amendment was agreed to.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Army National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, $126,920,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $17,600,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Director of the Army National Guard determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, $94,663,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $7,700,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Director of the Air National Guard determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Army Reserve as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, $103,946,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $8,337,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Chief of the Army Reserve determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Chairman, I would ask if the chair of the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee would rise and engage in a colloquy.

Mr. CULBERSON. It would be my privilege.

Mr. MICA. Thank you, sir.

First of all, I would like to commend you, Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP and the Appropriations Committee staff, for their efforts in bringing this important measure for our veterans and our military to the floor.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight a vital need of our central Florida veterans population. This year, as we approach the completion of construction of the new veterans hospital and medical complex at Lake Nona in Orlando, I would like to request your assistance in helping to keep the existing and valuable medical facilities and clinic at Baldwin Park in service to our veterans. This medical resource is an important Federal asset that must not sit idle even before the new medical center opens. It is critical that the VA make a positive determination on the future use of this property and medical treatment center.

With Florida's growing veteran population that is already the second largest in the Nation, it is important that we plan now for the future medical care of our veterans. Additionally, with those service men and women now returning from overseas conflicts, we must prepare for the future demand for medical services.

Two years ago, I wrote a letter to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to plan for this day in anticipation of keeping this medical facility open and using it for the benefit of our veterans. Most recently, a joint letter from the central Florida congressional delegation, both Democrats and Republicans, has been sent to the Secretary asking for his consideration of this request. I am now hoping, Mr. Chairman, that you will join us in our effort to ensure that the VA takes steps to preserve and utilize this much-needed medical center that we have there. The recently opened Lake Nona veterans 120-bed nursing facility and 60-bed domiciliary care unit

are already at capacity, confirming the need to maintain the Baldwin Park complex.

Mr. Chairman, finally I would just ask for your support of these current efforts to ensure that the existing VA medical facilities in Baldwin Park remain open and continue to provide world-class treatment for our veteran population.

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MICA. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. I want to assure my good friend from Florida, Chairman MICA, that I look forward to working with you to ensure that the VA does complete its independent study of this facility, and I hope that report is going to come back and show the continued need for the Baldwin Park facility.

I will work closely with you, sir, to make certain that the Veterans Administration does everything in its power to support the results of the independent study and work to keep that facility open.

Mr. MICA. Well, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your past work. And I thank the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP) and the staff for working with us. We look forward to ensuring that the VA medical complex at Baldwin Park remains open and continues to be used to provide medical services for our veterans.

Finally, Mr. Chair, I would like to insert into the RECORD two letters to Veterans Affairs Secretary Shinseki, one from myself and another from the central Florida congressional delegation.

CONGRESSS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, August 13, 2012.

Hon. ERIC SHINSEKI,
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY SHINSEKI: As we complete the Lake Nona Veterans' Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), I would like to request that the Baldwin Park Clinic and building it occupies continue to be utilized for primary, inpatient and domiciliary care for our returning veterans and those other veterans who require this type of care.

Under this plan, the Baldwin Park clinic would continue to provide essential medical and clinical services for the new VAMC including clinical and primary care assistance, lab work, and pharmacy and outpatient services, including mental health care. Because Florida's veteran population continues to expand, it is important to continue these veteran medical services at this facility for those veterans on the north side of the community so that they can continue to have access to these essential services. I respectfully ask that you give this proposal your full consideration.

The second proposal I am writing to you about is my strong support for maintaining a domiciliary care unit in the remaining portion of the hospital, either by the VA or contract services that would provide inpatient and domiciliary care for both our returning veterans and those others who are in need of this type of care. According to an August, 1995 GAO report, ''The former Naval Hospital's 153 beds could be used to meet the VA's service goals for veterans in East Central Florida.'' If implemented, this action would also provide transitional care for our returning veterans and ensure the maximum utilization of space at the Baldwin Park facility. I respectfully request that this proposal be part of your final decision in the space utilization of the Baldwin Park VA site after the Lake Nona complex is complete.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that our veterans receive the best medical care possible and once again respectfully request that you consider these proposals.

Sincerely,

JOHN L. MICA,
Member of Congress.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, April 9, 2014.

Hon. ERIC SHINSEKI,
Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY SHINSEKI: This year, as we approach the completion of construction of the new veterans' hospital and medical complex at Lake Nona, we would like to request that you consider keeping the existing clinic and medical facilities at Baldwin Park in service to our veterans. This complex is a valuable federal asset that must not sit idle once the new medical center opens.

With an increasing veteran population that is already the second largest in the nation, including those service men and women now returning from overseas conflicts, it is important that we plan now for their future medical care.

In the past, we have encouraged you to consider keeping this medical care facility open. We are now asking that you act soon to ensure that the VA will preserve and utilize this much needed VA property as Florida's veteran population continues to expand.

The recently opened Lake Nona veterans' 120-bed nursing facility and 60 bed domiciliary care unit are already at capacity and the demand for VA services will continue to grow in the Sunshine State.

These men and women who have faithfully served our nation deserve the very best medical care and the taxpayers valuable assets must not sit idle.

We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

JOHN L. MICA.
ALAN GRAYSON.
DANIEL WEBSTER.
CORRINE BROWN.

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

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVY RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the reserve components of the Navy and Marine Corps as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, $51,528,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $2,123,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of the Navy determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air Force Reserve as authorized by chapter 1803 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, $49,492,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $6,892,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Chief of the Air Force Reserve determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION SECURITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

For the United States share of the cost of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program for the acquisition and construction of military facilities and installations (including international military headquarters) and for related expenses for the collective defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Area as authorized by section 2806 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, $199,700,000, to remain available until expended.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, $78,609,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, $350,976,000.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, $16,412,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, $354,029,000.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, AIR FORCE

For expenses of family housing for the Air Force for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, $327,747,000.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, DEFENSE-WIDE

For expenses of family housing for the activities and agencies of the Department of Defense (other than the military departments) for operation and maintenance, leasing, and minor construction, as authorized by law, $61,100,000.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FAMILY HOUSING IMPROVEMENT FUND

For the Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund, $1,662,000, to remain available until expended, for family housing initiatives undertaken pursuant to section 2883 of title 10, United States Code,

providing alternative means of acquiring and improving military family housing and supporting facilities.

CHEMICAL DEMILITARIZATION CONSTRUCTION, DEFENSE-WIDE

For expenses of construction, not otherwise provided for, necessary for the destruction of the United States stockpile of lethal chemical agents and munitions in accordance with section 1412 of the Department of Defense Authorization Act, 1986 (50 U.S.C. 1521), and for the destruction of other chemical warfare materials that are not in the chemical weapon stockpile, as currently authorized by law, $38,715,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019, which shall be only for the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE ACCOUNT

For deposit into the Department of Defense Base Closure Account, established by section 2906(a)(1) of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (10 U.S.C. 2687 note), as amended by section 2711 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112–239), $270,085,000, to remain available until expended.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

SEC. 101. None of the funds made available in this title shall be expended for payments under a cost-plus-a-fixed-fee contract for construction, where cost estimates exceed $25,000, to be performed within the United States, except Alaska, without the specific approval in writing of the Secretary of Defense setting forth the reasons therefor.

SEC. 102. Funds made available in this title for construction shall be available for hire of passenger motor vehicles.

SEC. 103. Funds made available in this title for construction may be used for advances to the Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, for the construction of access roads as authorized by section 210 of title 23, United States Code, when projects authorized therein are certified as important to the national defense by the Secretary of Defense.

SEC. 104. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to begin construction of new bases in the United States for which specific appropriations have not been made.

SEC. 105. None of the funds made available in this title shall be used for purchase of land or land easements in excess of 100 percent of the value as determined by the Army Corps of Engineers or the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, except: (1) where there is a determination of value by a Federal court; (2) purchases negotiated by the Attorney General or the designee of the Attorney General; (3) where the estimated value is less than $25,000; or (4) as otherwise determined by the Secretary of Defense to be in the public interest.

SEC. 106. None of the funds made available in this title shall be used to: (1) acquire land; (2) provide for site preparation; or (3) install utilities for any family housing, except housing for which funds have been made available in annual Acts making appropriations for military construction.

SEC. 107. None of the funds made available in this title for minor construction may be used to transfer or relocate any activity from one base or installation to another, without prior notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 108. None of the funds made available in this title may be used for the procurement of steel for any construction project or activity for which American steel producers, fabricators, and manufacturers have been denied the opportunity to compete for such steel procurement.

SEC. 109. None of the funds available to the Department of Defense for military construction or family housing during the current fiscal year may be used to pay real property taxes in any foreign nation.

SEC. 110. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to initiate a new installation overseas without prior notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 111. None of the funds made available in this title may be obligated for architect and engineer contracts estimated by the Government to exceed $500,000 for projects to be accomplished in Japan, in any North Atlantic Treaty Organization member country, or in countries bordering the Arabian Sea, unless such contracts are awarded to United States firms or United States firms in joint venture with host nation firms.

SEC. 112. None of the funds made available in this title for military construction in the United States territories and possessions in the Pacific and on Kwajalein Atoll, or in countries within the United States Central Command Area of Responsibility, may be used to award any contract estimated by the Government to exceed $1,000,000 to a foreign contractor: *Provided*, That this section shall not be applicable to contract awards for which the lowest responsive and responsible bid of a United States contractor exceeds the lowest responsive and responsible bid of a foreign contractor by greater than 20 percent: *Provided further*, That this section shall not apply to contract awards for military construction on Kwajalein Atoll for which the lowest responsive and responsible bid is submitted by a Marshallese contractor.

SEC. 113. The Secretary of Defense shall inform the appropriate committees of both Houses of Congress, including the Committees on Appropriations, of plans and scope of any proposed military exercise involving United States personnel 30 days prior to its occurring, if amounts expended for construction, either temporary or permanent, are anticipated to exceed $100,000.

SEC. 114. Not more than 20 percent of the funds made available in this title which are limited for obligation during the current fiscal year shall be obligated during the last 2 months of the fiscal year.

SEC. 115. Funds appropriated to the Department of Defense for construction in prior years shall be available for construction authorized for each such military department by the authorizations enacted into law during the current session of Congress.

SEC. 116. For military construction or family housing projects that are being completed with funds otherwise expired or lapsed for obligation, expired or lapsed funds may be used to pay the cost of associated supervision, inspection, overhead, engineering and design on those projects and on subsequent claims, if any.

SEC. 117. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any funds made available to a military department or defense agency for the construction of military projects may be obligated for a military construction project or contract, or for any portion of such a project or contract, at any time before the end of the fourth fiscal year after the fiscal year for which funds for such project were made available, if the funds obligated for such project: (1) are obligated from funds available for military construction projects; and (2) do not exceed the amount appropriated for such project, plus any amount by which the cost of such project is increased pursuant to law.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 118. In addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense, proceeds deposited to the Department of Defense Base Closure Account established by section 207(a)(1) of the Defense Authorization Amendments and Base Closure and Realignment Act (10 U.S.C. 2687 note) pursuant to section 207(a)(2)(C) of such Act, may be transferred to the account established by section 2906(a)(1) of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (10 U.S.C. 2687 note), to be merged with, and to be available for the same purposes and the same time period as that account.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 119. Subject to 30 days prior notification, or 14 days for a notification provided in an electronic medium pursuant to sections 480 and 2883 of title 10, United States Code, to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress, such additional amounts as may be determined by the Secretary of Defense may be transferred to: (1) the Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund from amounts appropriated for construction in ''Family Housing'' accounts, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes and for the same period of time as amounts appropriated directly to the Fund; or (2) the Department of Defense Military Unaccompanied Housing Improvement Fund from amounts appropriated for construction of military unaccompanied housing in ''Military Construction'' accounts, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes and for the same period of time as amounts appropriated directly to the Fund: *Provided*, That appropriations made available to the Funds shall be available to cover the costs, as defined in section 502(5) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, of direct loans or loan guarantees issued by the Department of Defense pursuant to the provisions of subchapter IV of chapter 169 of title 10, United States Code, pertaining to alternative means of acquiring and improving military family housing, military unaccompanied housing, and supporting facilities.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 120. In addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense, amounts may be transferred from the Department of Defense Base Closure Account to the fund established by section 1013(d) of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3374) to pay for expenses associated with the Homeowners Assistance Program incurred under 42 U.S.C. 3374(a)(1)(A). Any amounts transferred shall be merged with and be available for the same purposes and for the same time period as the fund to which transferred.

SEC. 121. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, funds made available in this title for operation and maintenance of family housing shall be the exclusive source of funds for repair and maintenance of all family housing units, including general or flag officer quarters: *Provided*, That not more than $15,000 per unit may be spent annually for the maintenance and repair of any general or flag officer quarters without 30 days prior notification, or 14 days for a notification provided in an electronic medium pursuant to sections 480 and 2883 of title 10, United States Code, to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress, except that an after-the-fact notification shall be submitted if the limitation is exceeded solely due to costs associated with environmental remediation that could not be reasonably anticipated at the time of the budget submission: *Provided further*, That the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) is to report annually to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress all operation and maintenance expenditures for each individual general or flag officer quarters for the prior fiscal year.

SEC. 122. Amounts contained in the Ford Island Improvement Account established by subsection (h) of section 2814 of title 10, United States Code, are appropriated and shall be available until expended for the purposes specified in subsection (i)(1) of such section or until transferred pursuant to subsection (i)(3) of such section.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 123. During the 5-year period after appropriations available in this Act to the Department of Defense for military construction and family housing operation and maintenance and construction have expired for obligation, upon a determination that such appropriations will not be necessary for the liquidation of obligations or for making authorized adjustments to such appropriations for obligations incurred during the period of availability of such appropriations, unobligated balances of such appropriations may be transferred into the appropriation ''Foreign Currency Fluctuations, Construction, Defense'', to be merged with and to be available for the same time period and for the same purposes as the appropriation to which transferred.

SEC. 124. (a) Except as provided in subsection (b), none of the funds made available in this Act may be used by the Secretary of the Army to relocate a unit in the Army that—

(1) performs a testing mission or function that is not performed by any other unit in the Army and is specifically stipulated in title 10, United States Code; and

(2) is located at a military installation at which the total number of civilian employees of the Department of the Army and Army contractor personnel employed exceeds 10 percent of the total number of members of the regular and reserve components of the Army assigned to the installation.

(b) EXCEPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply if the Secretary of the Army certifies to the congressional defense committees that in proposing the relocation of the unit of the Army, the Secretary complied with Army Regulation 5-10 relating to the policy, procedures, and responsibilities for Army stationing actions.

SEC. 125. Amounts appropriated or otherwise made available in an account funded under the headings in this title may be transferred among projects and activities within the account in accordance with the reprogramming guidelines for military construction and family housing construction contained in Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation 7000.14–R, Volume 3, Chapter 7, of February 2009, as in effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 126. None of the funds made available in this title may be obligated or expended for planning and design and construction of projects at Arlington National Cemetery.

SEC. 127. For an additional amount for ''Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps'', ''Military Construction, Air Force'', ''Military Construction, Army Reserve'', and ''Military Construction, Navy Reserve'', $125,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, such funds may be obligated and expended to carry out construction of projects, excluding in Europe, as authorized in division B of Public Law 113-66: *Provided further*, That not later than 30 days after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this heading.

SEC. 128. For an additional amount for ''Military Construction, Army'' , ''Military Construction, Army National Guard'', and ''Military Construction, Army Reserve'', $245,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, such funds may only be obligated to carry out construction of projects as authorized in division B of an Act authorizing appropriations for fiscal year 2015 for military activities of the Department of Defense (relating to Military Construction Authorizations): *Provided further*, That not later than 30 days after enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Army shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this heading.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 129. Of the unobligated balances available for ''Military Construction, Army'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $79,577,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 130. Of the unobligated balances available for ''NATO Security Investment Program'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $25,000,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 131. Of the unobligated balances made available in prior appropriation Acts for the fund established in section 1013(d) of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3374) (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $100,000,000 are hereby rescinded.

SEC. 132. For the purposes of this Act, the term ''congressional defense committees'' means the Committees on Armed Services of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, and the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

TITLE II

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

COMPENSATION AND PENSIONS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For the payment of compensation benefits to or on behalf of veterans and a pilot program for disability examinations as authorized by section 107 and chapters 11, 13, 18, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code; pension benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 15, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code; and burial benefits, the Reinstated Entitlement Program for Survivors, emergency and other officers' retirement pay, adjusted-service credits and certificates, payment of premiums due on commercial life insurance policies guaranteed under the provisions of title IV of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 541 et seq.) and for other benefits as authorized by sections 107, 1312, 1977, and 2106, and chapters 23, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code, $78,687,709,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That not to exceed $15,430,000 of the amount appropriated under this heading shall be reimbursed to ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration'' and ''Information Technology Systems'' for necessary expenses in implementing the provisions of chapters 51, 53, and 55 of title 38, United States Code, the funding source for which is specifically provided as the ''Compensation and Pensions'' appropriation: *Provided further*, That such sums as may be earned on an actual qualifying patient basis, shall be reimbursed to ''Medical Care Collections Fund'' to augment the funding of individual medical facilities for nursing home care provided to pensioners as authorized.

READJUSTMENT BENEFITS

For the payment of readjustment and rehabilitation benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 21, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 41, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code, $14,761,862,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That expenses for rehabilitation program services and assistance which the Secretary is authorized to provide under subsection (a) of section 3104 of title 38, United States Code, other than under paragraphs (1), (2), (5), and (11) of that subsection, shall be charged to this account.

VETERANS INSURANCE AND INDEMNITIES

For military and naval insurance, national service life insurance, servicemen's indemnities, service-disabled veterans insurance, and veterans mortgage life insurance as authorized by chapters 19 and 21, title 38, United States Code, $63,257,000, to remain available until expended.

VETERANS HOUSING BENEFIT PROGRAM FUND

For the cost of direct and guaranteed loans, such sums as may be necessary to carry out the program, as authorized by subchapters I through III of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code: *Provided*, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974: *Provided further*, That during fiscal year 2015, within the resources available, not to exceed $500,000 in gross obligations for direct loans are authorized for specially adapted housing loans.

In addition, for administrative expenses to carry out the direct and guaranteed loan programs, $160,881,000.

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentlewoman is recognized for 5 minutes.

□ 1500

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to bring the House's attention to an important issue.

The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, also known as VRAP, which has helped our veterans retrain to develop the skills they need for jobs of today, expired on March 31. I had planned to offer an amendment today to reauthorize the program and provide funding for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program. However, I understand the amendment would have been subject to a point of order. Nevertheless, this critical issue is deserving of the House's attention.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, I know well the struggles our unemployed veterans face on a daily basis to reenter the workforce. In my home district in Ventura County, where I am proud to represent Naval Base Ventura County, we have a large community of veterans who have sacrificed for our country and who deserve

every effort we can to ensure they receive the training they need to find the jobs they deserve, especially after the recent recession.

It is deeply disappointing that the 113th Congress has allowed this critical job training program to expire. VRAP helps veterans who are no longer eligible for the GI Bill to get the training they need at community colleges and technical schools in high-demand occupations. One such veteran who is being helped by VRAP is my constituent, Jonathan Pascua. Jonathan is a first-generation Filipino American from Oxnard who served in the United States Marine Corps from 1995 to 2013.

As an Active Duty marine, he handled telecommunications on a vessel in theater during the Iraq war supporting his brothers and sisters who landed ashore. When Jonathan was preparing to retire from the Marine Corps, he learned about VRAP through their education benefits class and signed up for the program. He is currently a full-time student in Oxnard majoring in business management and is scheduled to graduate in 2015.

As a result of VRAP's expiration, Jonathan may not be able to afford to continue. That would be devastating for Jonathan and a tragedy for our country. That is why I introduced H.R. 4149, the bipartisan Help Hire Our Heroes Act, which has gained support from the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Association of the United States Navy.

Despite the obvious need for reauthorization of this important program and this body's solemn obligation to serve our veterans as they have served our Nation, my bill has still not been brought forward for a vote. My amendment would have ensured that this critical program continue, and I am disappointed that I was unable to offer it here today.

The Veterans Retraining Assistance Program has succeeded in helping many veterans retrain and find employment, and it should not have been allowed to lapse. Because our veterans, like Jonathan, were there for us, it is our duty to be there for them. Therefore, I urge the leadership of this Chamber to quickly bring forward legislation that will extend the VRAP program and help our unemployed veterans.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION LOANS PROGRAM ACCOUNT

For the cost of direct loans, $10,000, as authorized by chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code: *Provided*, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading are available to subsidize gross obligations for the principal amount of direct loans not to exceed $2,877,000.

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILMER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to speak in support of Project Labor Agreements.

As the House begins consideration of the annual Department of Veterans Affairs-Military Construction Appropriations bill later today, I urge my colleagues to continue to support Project Labor Agreements.

We have a great example of just how effective and efficient PLA projects can be with the Navy's largest ongoing military construction project—the construction for the second Explosives Handling Wharf at Naval Base Kitsap. The Explosive Handling Wharf is a critical component of our Nation's nuclear deterrent capability. The use of a PLA at a site of this significance is telling.

The Navy recently shared with me that:

> To date, the PLA has performed its primary function by ensuring no labor disputes interfered with the progress of work on the project and that the project is on schedule and the PLA is operating as intended.

Mr. Chairman, why would we remove such a useful tool for military construction, especially at a time when budgets are tight and milestones are tighter? Let's stay on the path to success and maintain the continued use of Project Labor Agreements.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, I rise for the purpose of engaging in a colloquy with the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. Chairman, I believe we can all agree that honoring our Nation's veterans is of vital importance. They sacrifice so much for us and ask for so little in return. One thing that means so much to so many veterans in the Fifth Congressional District of Colorado is the establishment of a Southern Colorado National VA Cemetery.

Would the chairman agree that it is critical to provide dignified final resting places for our heroes and that it is important to conveniently locate them near large veterans populations?

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LAMBORN. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Yes, of course, I completely agree with you that one of the fundamental obligations of the United States of America is to ensure that these men and women who have served their country have earned that piece of earth as a convenient and dignified final resting place.

Mr. LAMBORN. I thank the chairman for his words of agreement. Given the advanced stage of the project and the amount of work that has already taken place on the Southern Colorado National VA Cemetery, including land being purchased in southeast Colorado Springs and master planning due to start in mere months, would the chairman also agree that it is vital that we work together to ensure that construction is fully funded in the appropriations process for upcoming fiscal years?

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. CULBERSON. I completely agree with you, Mr. LAMBORN, that this project is too far along, and it is important that we fund it in fiscal year 2016, and I will work with you and your colleagues from Colorado to ensure it is funded.

Mr. LAMBORN. Well, I thank the chairman, and I look forward to working with him. I appreciate the hard work he does for our military and for our veterans, including this particular important project. I pledge to work with him on these and other matters as we seek to honor our Nation's veterans.

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

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

In addition, for administrative expenses necessary to carry out the direct loan program, $361,000, which may be paid to the appropriation for ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration''.

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN HOUSING LOAN PROGRAM ACCOUNT

For administrative expenses to carry out the direct loan program authorized by subchapter V of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code, $1,130,000.

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

MEDICAL SERVICES

For necessary expenses for furnishing, as authorized by law, inpatient and outpatient care and treatment to beneficiaries of the Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans described in section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, including care and treatment in facilities not under the jurisdiction of the Department, and including medical supplies and equipment, bioengineering services, food services, and salaries and expenses of healthcare employees hired under title 38, United States Code, aid to State homes as authorized by section 1741 of title 38, United States Code, assistance and support services for caregivers as authorized by section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, loan repayments authorized by section 604 of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 124 Stat. 1174; 38 U.S.C. 7681 note), and hospital care and medical services authorized by section 1787 of title 38, United States Code, $47,603,202,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2015, and shall remain available until September 30, 2016: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a priority for the provision of medical treatment for veterans who have service-connected disabilities, lower income, or have special needs: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall give priority funding for the provision of basic medical benefits to veterans in enrollment priority groups 1 through 6: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may authorize the dispensing of prescription drugs from Veterans Health Administration facilities to enrolled veterans with privately written prescriptions based on

requirements established by the Secretary: *Provided further*, That the implementation of the program described in the previous proviso shall incur no additional cost to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

MEDICAL SUPPORT AND COMPLIANCE

For necessary expenses in the administration of the medical, hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, construction, supply, and research activities, as authorized by law; administrative expenses in support of capital policy activities; and administrative and legal expenses of the Department for collecting and recovering amounts owed the Department as authorized under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, and the Federal Medical Care Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. 2651 et seq.), $6,144,000,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2015, and shall remain available until September 30, 2016.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

For necessary expenses for the maintenance and operation of hospitals, nursing homes, domiciliary facilities, and other necessary facilities of the Veterans Health Administration; for administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department; for oversight, engineering, and architectural activities not charged to project costs; for repairing, altering, improving, or providing facilities in the several hospitals and homes under the jurisdiction of the Department, not otherwise provided for, either by contract or by the hire of temporary employees and purchase of materials; for leases of facilities; and for laundry services, $4,915,000,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2015, and shall remain available until September 30, 2016.

MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH

For necessary expenses in carrying out programs of medical and prosthetic research and development as authorized by chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, $588,922,000, plus reimbursements, shall remain available until September 30, 2016.

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

For necessary expenses of the National Cemetery Administration for operations and maintenance, not otherwise provided for, including uniforms or allowances therefor; cemeterial expenses as authorized by law; purchase of one passenger motor vehicle for use in cemeterial operations; hire of passenger motor vehicles; and repair, alteration or improvement of facilities under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery Administration, $256,800,000, of which not to exceed $25,600,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016.

DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary operating expenses of the Department of Veterans Affairs, not otherwise provided for, including administrative expenses in support of Department-Wide capital planning, management and policy activities, uniforms, or allowances therefor; not to exceed $25,000 for official reception and representation expenses; hire of passenger motor vehicles; and reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services, $321,591,000, of which not to exceed $16,080,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016: *Provided*, That funds provided under this heading may be transferred to ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration''.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. SINEMA

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 31, line 12, after the first dollar amount, insert ''(reduced by $1,000,000)''.

Page 36, line 5, after the first dollar amount, insert ''(increased by $1,000,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. Chairman, the Sinema-Salmon amendment is a commonsense, budget-neutral fix that helps restore our veterans' trust in the VA by transferring additional resources to the VA Office of Inspector General so that it can carry out its mission to provide oversight and accountability.

Our amendment increases funding for the VA OIG by $1 million and offsets this increase by reducing VA General Administration funding by the same amount.

I want to thank the chairman and ranking member of the Military Construction and VA appropriations subcommittee, Mr. CULBERSON and Mr. BISHOP, for supporting this amendment and for working with us on this issue.

Mr. Chairman, we offer this amendment because the recent allegations of secret lists and long wait times at the Phoenix VA, which may have caused some 40 veteran deaths, require answers and action. This is immoral, unconscionable, irresponsible, and un-American.

We need answers in Phoenix. But this is not an isolated incident. A December 2012 GAO report found that Veterans Health Administration wait times are unreliable. Stories of health complications and deaths because of wait times have surfaced in other parts of the country, including South Carolina and Texas. That this is happening to the good people who have defended our flag and our freedoms is beyond the pale.

I have worked on veterans' issues for a long time, and it is wrong that it took deaths to get action—but there had better be action now. I vow to help veterans and veteran families in any way I can, and I urge families to reach out to my office so we can help.

The morning after the story was reported in Arizona, the parents of Daniel Somers, a veteran who committed suicide in my district last summer, called me, and they told me that they believe Daniel may have been one of the 40 on that list.

Our veterans and their families—families like the Somers—need answers, and we must hold accountable those responsible. That is the only way that we can restore veterans' trust and the public trust in the VA health care system.

The Sinema-Salmon amendment, which will improve oversight and accountability at the VA, is a step towards restoring that trust.

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

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SALMON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the gentlewoman from the Ninth Congressional District of Arizona, which is right adjacent to mine. She is my neighbor, and I am proud to cosponsor this with her to show a strong unity of bipartisanship for our veterans. And if there isn't a better cause here in Washington, D.C., to stand bipartisan with, I don't know what it is.

I want to echo some of the things that Congresswoman SINEMA has said. This is unconscionable. And since these allegations have come to light, we have received numerous phone calls in our district from other like-minded people that have said, I had a similar circumstance happen to me.

So when Representative SINEMA approached me about cosponsoring this amendment to allocate $1 million from the general fund of the Veterans Administration and appropriate it to the IG so that we can get a thorough investigation, it seems to me that this is the least we can do.

Why is this important? You might remember just a few years ago that a gentleman named—I call him gentleman, I think that is a loose term—Ken Lay, the CEO of Enron, went to prison for cooking the books. Now we have got some serious allegations about those that are entrusted with a sacred trust—our veterans' very livelihood—at stake. And I believe that this group of folks in the Veterans Administration has betrayed that trust. But we have got to get to the bottom of it.

Why is it important? Because it is the integrity of the system. A lot of the folks in my district, the veterans, have said that they don't have the confidence to even be utilizing that system anymore, and so they are right now going out of network. They are paying out of their pocket. I have heard many of them say that, as well.

So we, as a Congress, are required to provide oversight for these kinds of programs and ensure that they are getting the best—not the mediocre, and certainly not the worst, which I believe is happening right now in our own State in Arizona—and we demand justice. We demand some sunshine. Sunshine is the best disinfectant, and we demand some sunshine on this process. That is why we want to investigate it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of this amendment and urge my colleagues to adopt it. I am, as we all are, appalled, mortified, and heartsick over these reports out of the Phoenix VA. It is appalling to think that any veteran who has served our country would be denied access to medical care, much less lose their life or have permanent damage to their health.

I cannot imagine the agony these families are going through, so therefore the amendment is a good idea to give an additional $1 million to the inspector general, who is capable of conducting the type of investigation necessary to determine what actually happened here. In the instant, if there does, indeed, appear to be deliberate, intentional refusal to put these folks into the VA system, there will be criminal charges, and we will make sure of that. We will make sure that if anyone has been denied service, they are held accountable for it.

It is an appalling set of circumstances genuinely. It is a terrible reflection on all the good men and women, the doctors, and the health care professionals that work throughout the VA system do, do their best to provide top quality medical care to our veterans as they come out of Active Duty service to the country.

□ 1515

So we are anxious to see what the facts are and criminal charges be pressed if, indeed, it turns out to be as we have seen in the press, so I strongly support the amendment and urge Members to adopt it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, when I learned of the allegations of intentional misrepresentation of wait times, which may have caused some 40 deaths at the Phoenix VA, I was deeply disappointed and downright disgusted.

I am pleased to see a bipartisan approach, and I believe this amendment will provide additional resources to the VA Office of Inspector General to improve oversight and accountability at the VA.

I agree with my colleagues from Arizona that this situation requires answers and a thorough investigation. I believe Congress should allow the VA IG to complete its investigation, so the Congress can take appropriate action, if needed. The last thing I want is a knee-jerk reaction that could cause additional problems.

I believe this amendment is the right approach, and I fully support it, and I urge all Members to do the same. I believe that a thorough investigation of the matter is the only way to restore our veterans' trust and the public trust in the VA health care system.

We owe it to our veterans to ensure that the VA is providing the best possible care and that care is timely and accessible. I think this amendment will help achieve that goal.

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

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of this amendment, which seeks to redirect funds from the general administration account to the Department of Veterans Affairs inspector general's office.

As a member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, I am a firm believer in oversight of the Federal Government. The more sunlight on Federal activity, the more honest and efficient it will be. I am also a strong proponent of the inspector general community.

Since the Inspector General Act was passed into law, the IG community has saved taxpayers billions of dollars and has uncovered countless examples of wrongdoing in the Federal Government.

These allegations about the Phoenix VA health care system are troubling, but I am also a firm believer of the rule of law. These investigations must be completed in order for us to have these answers. The answers from the IG report will yield both improvements to the VA process and hold accountable anyone who has done any harm.

I support this amendment because I support a timely, but thorough resolution to the investigation. Let us give the IG's office the resources it needs. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support passage of this commonsense amendment.

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

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support as the chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

I rise in support of the Sinema-Salmon bipartisan amendment to transfer funds from the general administration line item within the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Office of Inspector General for the purpose of really looking into this issue, the issue of veterans dying from preventable illnesses because, in fact, the VA was playing a game in the Phoenix VA hospital with appointment times.

My office—my investigators last Monday turned over this ''secret list'' that the VA was using that they, in fact, are denying today to the VA Office of Inspector General.

In that list, it will demonstrate that there are veterans with preventable illnesses that died waiting for an appointment, and we also know that there were administrators who received bonuses for supposedly bringing down these wait times for appointments.

My greatest fear is not only that this act which has criminal implications, this alleged act which has criminal implications, occurred in the Phoenix VA hospital, but also my concern is that it is more widespread, it is more systematic, that it is something that the leadership in the VA has knowingly or unwittingly allowed to occur, and so I think it is important for us to get down to the bottom of it.

It is a great tragedy that we don't have confidence—certainly, I don't have confidence in the leadership of the Veterans Administration in and of themselves to get down to the bottom of it, and it takes the Office of the Inspector General and that it takes my investigators in the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee for the House Veterans' Affairs Committee to uncover these things, bring these things to light, and move them forward.

So, again, I rise in support of the Sinema-Salmon bipartisan amendment to transfer moneys from the administration of the Veterans Administration to the Office of Inspector General to move these investigations forward; and if, in fact, they are found to be true, I certainly hope that they are referred to criminal prosecution.

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

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the Salmon-Sinema amendment to increase funding for the VA Office of the Inspector General in order to provide accountability at the VA and increase quality of care.

It has been recently reported that veterans are dying while waiting for treatment, including at the West Palm Beach VA facility that serves my district. Following this news, allegations have surfaced that 40 veterans in the Phoenix VA health care system died while being placed on a secret wait list. This is beyond unacceptable.

Mr. Chairman, it is vital that the inspector general get to the bottom of these claims as soon as possible so that veterans of the Palm Beaches, Treasure Coast, and around the country who fought for our freedoms get the timely and high-quality care they deserve.

I thank my colleagues from Arizona, Congresswoman SINEMA and Congressman SALMON, for their leadership on this pressing issue.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KIRKPATRICK. Mr. Chairman, I support this amendment. It is my job as ranking member of the House Veterans' Affairs Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee to ensure that we get to the bottom of the allegations that patients died at the Phoenix VA due to delayed care.

I want to ensure that the inspector general has the resources it needs to conduct a swift and thorough investigation of the Phoenix VA and at other facilities where treatment delays are reported.

We need to ensure there is accountability and that veterans will never again wait for the care they deserve.

Delayed care is denied care, and veterans should never have to fight to receive care when they have already served and sacrificed for our country.

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

Mr. BARBER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARBER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of this important bipartisan amendment that will provide additional funding to support the VA Office of Inspector General. This will help provide the oversight and accountability that is currently needed in the VA. As we all know, recently, allegations of a secret waiting list at the Phoenix VA health care system may well have led to the preventable deaths of up to 40 veterans.

I am appalled and infuriated to think that the VA ignored the needs of those who served our country and forced them to wait months to see a doctor.

We have demanded that the VA Secretary address these allegations of falsified records, preventable or premature deaths, mismanagement, and other systematic problems in the VA; but more must be done. We must quickly get to the bottom of this and bring about swift action to prevent a reoccurrence, so that our veterans get prompt access to the best possible care that they so richly deserve.

The amendment we are introducing will provide the necessary resources to the VA inspector general that he or she will need to investigate these horrendous allegations and provide the public and the grieving families the answers they deserve.

Once the investigation is completed, those who are found responsible should be quickly held accountable. We must restore our veterans' trust in the VA health care system, so that our men and women who have sacrificed so much for our country can finally get the care they have earned.

As the son of a veteran and a Member of Congress representing 85,000 veterans, Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this amendment, so we can find the answers and take action to hold the VA accountable.

Ms. SINEMA. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BARBER. I yield to the gentlewoman from Arizona.

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. Chair, I just want to thank the chair of the committee, Mr. CULBERSON; our ranking member, Mr. BISHOP; and Mr. SALMON for cosponsoring the amendment, as well as all of my colleagues from Arizona and around the country for joining together on this bipartisan amendment.

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

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. SINEMA).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. COSTA

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment to H.R. 4486.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 31, line 12, after the first dollar amount, insert the following: ''(reduced by $10,500,000)''.

Page 32, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert the following: ''(increased by $10,000,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Chairman, this bill makes critical investments in our military and upholds a sacred promise we make to our men and women in uniform that we will stand by them when they return home, but we can do more.

My amendment provides additional funding to end what has been a shameful backlog of disability claims that, for too long, has delayed benefits for veterans throughout the west coast, especially in the San Joaquin Valley that I represent.

The Oakland regional office services the majority of veterans throughout the west coast and in my district. Sadly, it has one of the largest loads of backlogged casework. Currently, more than 10,000 entitlement claims are stuck in this backlog, and the average claim is left pending for nearly 400 days, which is over a year. This is unacceptable. It is immoral.

Yesterday, the Central Valley Honor Flight brought 68 World War II veterans from California to see the World War II Memorial and other important monuments in our Nation's capital. These men and women raised their right hand over 70 years ago and took an oath that they would defend our Nation and our freedom for the future of democracy throughout the world.

Their efforts and their honor is without question. This is a depth that we can never repay. Therefore, it is our obligation to provide them with the care that they earned for their service to our country.

This amendment I am offering today honors the service of these World War II veterans and veterans of all the wars who have served our Nation. Specifically, this amendment provides $10 million to the Veterans Benefit Administration to pay for programs like the veterans' claims intake program, the centralized mail initiative, and staff overtime.

□ 1530

No one can deny that the Veterans Administration recently has taken strong and meaningful steps to end the backlog, but we can do more. They have gone from 2½ years now to over 400 days. Well, that is progress, but it is not good enough.

Our work is not complete until we are able to strip every bit of red tape separating a veteran from the benefits that they have earned and should receive.

I want to thank my colleagues who have cosponsored this amendment: Congressman LAMALFA, Congressman THOMPSON, Congressman DENHAM, and Congressman LOWENTHAL; and I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON, as well as Ranking Member BISHOP for their efforts and good work on this important bill.

I hope that we will adopt this amendment, so that we can do the right thing, which is end this backlog once and for all, so veterans who have served their country can receive the benefits that they so richly deserve.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank my colleague Mr. COSTA and my other California colleagues, as well as everybody in this body that seeks to make things right with our veterans and the VA.

While I always support reasonable spending, I would rather direct appropriate funding from the general fund towards the issue that is causing all the other horrendous issues at the VA. It is the backlog of veterans' claims.

All the illegal and unthinkable activities that have been uncovered in the last year, much of it, I believe, stems from the backlog that is only going to increase if the VA does not get things right and quickly.

I have veterans in my district that have claims that have been pending for over a year. This is simply unacceptable—in many cases, well over a year; in some cases, decades.

Much like Mr. COSTA, my veterans feed into the Oakland VA. This facility has the longest wait time for claims to be finished in all of the U.S. Our veterans do not deserve this. Something has to change, and it has to happen now. Today, we are drawing a line in the sand that this backlog is unacceptable.

My hope is that this amendment offered by Mr. COSTA, Mr. THOMPSON, myself, and several others will be a step in the right direction in getting these claims closed in a fair and timely manner. We are giving the VA the necessary resources to get this done. We expect them to actually get it done.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the gentleman's amendment. Along with the electronic medical records, there is no more important thing this committee and this Congress can do to help our veterans to ensure the rapid disposal of this terrible backlog in disability claims.

I fully support the amendment. It builds on the $20 million increase we have already provided in the bill. I assure my colleagues that Mr. BISHOP and I will continue to exercise aggressive oversight to ensure the money is

spent wisely and carefully to reduce the backlog and that the VA meet their deadlines to get the backlog disposed of as quickly as humanly possible.

I support the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LOWENTHAL. Mr. Chairman, first, I rise in support of the Costa amendment.

I also want to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP and also Representative COSTA for the time that they have given me to speak about this. My congressional district is home to the Long Beach VA, which is one of the largest institutions for veterans in southern California.

In California, there is currently one congressional affairs analyst to assist 33 congressional offices that have questions about casework. There are delays in responses to congressional caseworkers and an even longer delay in aid and attendance claims, particularly when those claims regard elderly frail veterans with rapidly declining health issues and sometimes, unfortunately, approval comes too late.

While it is critically important that we provide overtime pay for workers who are already stretched thin—and I think that is critically important—I also encourage the department to use some of these funds to hire additional staff.

I urge my colleagues to support the Costa amendment to H.R. 4486 and encourage the Veterans Benefits Administration to hire more staff to address the VA backlog and to help our Nation's veterans.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA).

The amendment was agreed to.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

BOARD OF VETERANS APPEALS

For necessary operating expenses of the Board of Veterans Appeals, $94,294,000, of which not to exceed $9,429,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016.

GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

For necessary operating expenses of the Veterans Benefits Administration, not otherwise provided for, including hire of passenger motor vehicles, reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services, and reimbursement of the Department of Defense for the cost of overseas employee mail, $2,514,254,000: *Provided*, That expenses for services and assistance authorized under paragraphs (1), (2), (5), and (11) of section 3104(a) of title 38, United States Code, that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines are necessary to enable entitled veterans: (1) to the maximum extent feasible, to become employable and to obtain and maintain suitable employment; or (2) to achieve maximum independence in daily living, shall be charged to this account: *Provided further*, That of the funds made available under this heading, not to exceed $125,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. RUIZ

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 32, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert ''(reduced by $5,000,000)(increased by $5,000,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment to H.R. 4486, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

This amendment is for the brave men and women who have served our country, our veterans. Right now, in my district and across the Nation, thousands of veterans who have sacrificed for our country are struggling to receive access to benefits that they have earned. This is due to the enormous claims backlog at the Veterans Affairs Administration.

Currently, California is home to almost 2 million veterans, almost 140,000 in Riverside County alone. There is an additional 40,000 veterans expected to return to the State every year for the next several years.

As our troops continue to return home and assimilate back into civilian life, it is critical we are able to keep faith with our veterans and ensure they have timely access to critical benefits.

Too often, Washington becomes bogged down with statistics on a page or numbers on a screen that show how this backlog is affecting veterans, but the people this is affecting are not just a statistic. They are men and women, like retired Air Force Master Sergeant Andrew Walker and his family from Beaumont, California, who I represent.

Mr. Walker and his family struggled with the VA, waiting years on end, without receiving the critical health benefits he earned and needed. Due to what seemed like an insurmountable claims backlog, Mr. Walker told me that he suffered pain and frustration, leading to hopelessness and despair. He felt dejected and lost. This is unconscionable and no way to treat a veteran and his family.

I am thankful I was able to help resolve Mr. Walker's claim, but the reality is there are many more stories just like this one that continue every day across the country. It is critical that we as a Nation work urgently to address the claims backlog.

That is why I am offering this amendment to advocate for an additional $5 million to fund the digital scanning of health and benefits files to reduce the backlog by redirecting funding within the general operating expenses account of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

This amendment simply directs funds towards the digital scanning of health and benefit files that will reduce the claims backlog without any new spending. As an emergency medicine physician, I understand the importance of efficiency in health care.

By committing resources to digitizing health and benefit files, we will further increase VA's capacity to tackle the claims backlog, ensuring veterans receive the benefits that they have earned in a timely manner.

Let us continue to bear in mind that these men and women have served this country and they have put their lives on the line. We must serve them by making certain that Congress focuses on eliminating the claims backlog for good.

I encourage my colleagues to stand up for veterans and support my pragmatic amendment to reduce the veterans' claims processing time.

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

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the gentleman's amendment.

This is something that we have all worked together arm in arm and welcome the additional resources with the assurance to our employers—the taxpayers—that we will provide aggressive oversight and ensure that the money is actually used to reduce the backlog as fast as humanly possible and, above all, to enforce the law because the greatest check and balance we have as guardians of the Treasury and good stewards of our taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars is the power of the purse.

I welcome the gentleman's amendment and look forward to supporting it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Washington is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I would like to engage in a colloquy of the subcommittee leadership.

First off, I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for agreeing to work with me on an issue that is very important to former servicemembers.

After a decade at war, many women servicemembers, for instance, are at risk for reproductive and urinary tract problems. This risk results from deployment conditions and a lack of predeployment women's health information.

In addition, the nature of the current conflict and increasing use of improvised explosive devices have left servicemembers with blast injuries that include spinal cord injury and trauma to the reproductive and urinary tracts.

The result is a severe impact to these servicemembers and their ability to create and raise a family upon their return from the battlefield.

According to the Department of Defense, between 2003 and 2011, nearly 2,000 women and men suffered these life-changing battle injuries during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Disabled veterans have already paid much too high a price in service to our country. They should not have to pay a higher cost when they come home to try to start a family. The Department of Veterans Affairs cannot provide the care that they need.

While the Department of Defense and TRICARE are already able to provide the necessary treatment to servicemembers with these injuries, the VA services are not able to meet the complex needs of severely injured veterans.

I hope I can continue to call up on the able leadership of the subcommittee to help resolve this issue as we move forward on this bill and move it to conference.

With that, I yield to the ranking member.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I would like to thank the gentleman from Washington for bringing this issue to our attention. I will certainly work with you, as well I am sure the chairman will and the members of our subcommittee, as we go forward to find a meaningful solution to this problem.

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. I want to thank the ranking member and the leadership of the subcommittee, Mr. Chairman.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary expenses for information technology systems and telecommunications support, including developmental information systems and operational information systems; for pay and associated costs; and for the capital asset acquisition of information technology systems, including management and related contractual costs of said acquisitions, including contractual costs associated with operations authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, $3,870,552,000, plus reimbursements: *Provided*, That $1,039,000,000 shall be for pay and associated costs, of which not to exceed $31,170,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016: *Provided further*, That $2,283,217,000 shall be for operations and maintenance, of which not to exceed $160,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016: *Provided further*, That $548,335,000 shall be for information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement, and shall remain available until September 30, 2016: *Provided further*, That amounts made available for information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement may not be obligated or expended until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Chief Information Officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs submits to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a certification of the amounts, in parts or in full, to be obligated and expended for each development project: *Provided further*, That amounts made available for salaries and expenses, operations and maintenance, and information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement may be transferred among the three subaccounts after the Secretary of Veterans Affairs requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued: *Provided further*, That amounts made available for the ''Information Technology Systems'' account for development, modernization, and enhancement may be transferred among projects or to newly defined projects: *Provided further*, That no project may be increased or decreased by more than $1,000,000 of cost prior to submitting a request to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress to make the transfer and an approval is issued, or absent a response, a period of 30 days has elapsed: *Provided further*, That funds under this heading may be used by the Interagency Program Office through the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop a standard data reference terminology model: *Provided further*, That of the funds made available for information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement for VistA Evolution, not more than 25 percent may be obligated or expended until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs submits to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress, and such Committees approve, a report that describes: (1) the status of VistA Evolution project development and any corrective actions taken where the plan established in the VistA Evolution program plan (hereinafter referred to as the ''Plan''), VistA 4 product roadmap (Roadmap), or the VistA Evolution cost estimate, dated March 24, 2014 may have fallen short; (2) any changes to the scope of the VistA Evolution program as established in the Plan; (3) actual program costs incurred and any refinements to the cost estimate presented in the Plan based on actual costs incurred; (4) progress in meeting the schedule milestones that have been established in the Plan; (5) program performance relative to the performance measures that have been identified in the Plan and the Roadmap; (6) plans for testing the VistA system and test results; (7) VistA Evolution program risks and issues that have been identified and any agency responses to such risks and issues; (8) the effort to achieve interoperability between the electronic health record systems of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, including the scope, cost, schedule, and performance benchmarks of the interoperable record; and (9) progress toward developing and implementing the interoperable electronic health record throughout the two Departments' medical facilities: *Provided further*, That the funds made available under this heading for information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement, shall be for the projects, and in the amounts, specified under this heading in the report accompanying this Act.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

For necessary expenses of the Office of Inspector General, to include information technology, in carrying out the provisions of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), $121,411,000, of which $10,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016.

CONSTRUCTION, MAJOR PROJECTS

For constructing, altering, extending, and improving any of the facilities, including parking projects, under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or for any of the purposes set forth in sections 316, 2404, 2406, and chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, not otherwise provided for, including planning, architectural and engineering services, construction management services, maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project, services of claims analysts, offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs, and site acquisition, where the estimated cost of a project is more than the amount set forth in section 8104(a)(3)(A) of title 38, United States Code, or where funds for a project were made available in a previous major project appropriation, $561,800,000, of which $527,800,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2019, and of which $34,000,000 shall remain available until expended: *Provided*, That except for advance planning activities, including needs assessments which may or may not lead to capital investments, and other capital asset management related activities, including portfolio development and management activities, and investment strategy studies funded through the advance planning fund and the planning and design activities funded through the design fund, including needs assessments which may or may not lead to capital investments, and salaries and associated costs of the resident engineers who oversee those capital investments funded through this account, and funds provided for the purchase of land for the National Cemetery Administration through the land acquisition line item, none of the funds made available under this heading shall be used for any project which has not been approved by the Congress in the budgetary process: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading for fiscal year 2015, for each approved project shall be obligated: (1) by the awarding of a construction documents contract by September 30, 2015; and (2) by the awarding of a construction contract by September 30, 2016: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall promptly submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a written report on any approved major construction project for which obligations are not incurred within the time limitations established above.

CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS

For constructing, altering, extending, and improving any of the facilities, including parking projects, under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including planning and assessments of needs which may lead to capital investments, architectural and engineering services, maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project, services of claims analysts, offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs, and site acquisition, or for any of the purposes set forth in sections 316, 2404, 2406, and chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, not otherwise provided for, where the estimated cost of a project is equal to or less than the amount set forth in section 8104(a)(3)(A) of title 38, United States Code, $495,200,000, to remain available until September 30, 2019, along with unobligated balances of previous ''Construction, Minor Projects'' appropriations which are hereby made available for any project where the estimated cost is equal to or less than the amount set forth in such section: *Provided*, That funds made available under this heading shall be for: (1) repairs to any of the nonmedical facilities under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department which are necessary because of loss or damage caused by any natural disaster or catastrophe; and (2) temporary measures necessary to prevent or to minimize further loss by such causes.

GRANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF STATE EXTENDED CARE FACILITIES

For grants to assist States to acquire or construct State nursing home and domiciliary facilities and to remodel, modify, or alter existing hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary facilities in State homes, for furnishing care to veterans as authorized by sections 8131 through 8137 of title 38, United States Code, $80,000,000, to remain available until expended.

GRANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF VETERANS CEMETERIES

For grants to assist States and tribal organizations in establishing, expanding, or improving veterans cemeteries as authorized by section 2408 of title 38, United States Code, $45,000,000, to remain available until expended.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 201. Any appropriation for fiscal year 2015 for ''Compensation and Pensions'', ''Readjustment Benefits'', and ''Veterans Insurance and Indemnities'' may be transferred as necessary to any other of the mentioned appropriations: *Provided*, That before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and such Committees issue an approval, or absent a response, a period of 30 days has elapsed.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 202. Amounts made available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015, in this Act or any other Act, under the ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', and ''Medical Facilities'' accounts may be transferred among the accounts: *Provided*, That any transfers between the ''Medical Services'' and ''Medical Support and Compliance'' accounts of 1 percent or less of the total amount appropriated to the account in this or any other Act may take place subject to notification from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the amount and purpose of the transfer: *Provided further*, That any transfers between the ''Medical Services'' and ''Medical Support and Compliance'' accounts in excess of 1 percent, or exceeding the cumulative 1 percent for the fiscal year, may take place only after the Secretary requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued: *Provided further*, That any transfers to or from the ''Medical Facilities'' account may take place only after the Secretary requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued.

SEC. 203. Appropriations available in this title for salaries and expenses shall be available for services authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code; hire of passenger motor vehicles; lease of a facility or land or both; and uniforms or allowances therefore, as authorized by sections 5901 through 5902 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 204. No appropriations in this title (except the appropriations for ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects'') shall be available for the purchase of any site for or toward the construction of any new hospital or home.

SEC. 205. No appropriations in this title shall be available for hospitalization or examination of any persons (except beneficiaries entitled to such hospitalization or examination under the laws providing such benefits to veterans, and persons receiving such treatment under sections 7901 through 7904 of title 5, United States Code, or the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.)), unless reimbursement of the cost of such hospitalization or examination is made to the ''Medical Services'' account at such rates as may be fixed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 206. Appropriations available in this title for ''Compensation and Pensions'', ''Readjustment Benefits'', and ''Veterans Insurance and Indemnities'' shall be available for payment of prior year accrued obligations required to be recorded by law against the corresponding prior year accounts within the last quarter of fiscal year 2014.

SEC. 207. Appropriations available in this title shall be available to pay prior year obligations of corresponding prior year appropriations accounts resulting from sections 3328(a), 3334, and 3712(a) of title 31, United States Code, except that if such obligations are from trust fund accounts they shall be payable only from ''Compensation and Pensions''.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 208. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, during fiscal year 2015, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, from the National Service Life Insurance Fund under section 1920 of title 38, United States Code, the Veterans' Special Life Insurance Fund under section 1923 of title 38, United States Code, and the United States Government Life Insurance Fund under section 1955 of title 38, United States Code, reimburse the ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration'' and ''Information Technology Systems'' accounts for the cost of administration of the insurance programs financed through those accounts: *Provided*, That reimbursement shall be made only from the surplus earnings accumulated in such an insurance program during fiscal year 2015 that are available for dividends in that program after claims have been paid and actuarially determined reserves have been set aside: *Provided further*, That if the cost of administration of such an insurance program exceeds the amount of surplus earnings accumulated in that program, reimbursement shall be made only to the extent of such surplus earnings: *Provided further*, That the Secretary shall determine the cost of administration for fiscal year 2015 which is properly allocable to the provision of each such insurance program and to the provision of any total disability income insurance included in that insurance program.

SEC. 209. Amounts deducted from enhanced-use lease proceeds to reimburse an account for expenses incurred by that account during a prior fiscal year for providing enhanced-use lease services, may be obligated during the fiscal year in which the proceeds are received.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 210. Funds available in this title or funds for salaries and other administrative expenses shall also be available to reimburse the Office of Resolution Management of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication under section 319 of title 38, United States Code, for all services provided at rates which will recover actual costs but not to exceed $42,904,000 for the Office of Resolution Management and $3,400,000 for the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication: *Provided*, That payments may be made in advance for services to be furnished based on estimated costs: *Provided further*, That amounts received shall be credited to the ''General Administration'' and ''Information Technology Systems'' accounts for use by the office that provided the service.

SEC. 211. No appropriations in this title shall be available to enter into any new lease of real property if the estimated annual rental cost is more than $1,000,000, unless the Secretary submits a report which the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress approve within 30 days following the date on which the report is received.

SEC. 212. No funds of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall be available for hospital care, nursing home care, or medical services provided to any person under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, for a non-service-connected disability described in section 1729(a)(2) of such title, unless that person has disclosed to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in such form as the Secretary may require, current, accurate third-party reimbursement information for purposes of section 1729 of such title: *Provided*, That the Secretary may recover, in the same manner as any other debt due the United States, the reasonable charges for such care or services from any person who does not make such disclosure as required: *Provided further*, That any amounts so recovered for care or services provided in a prior fiscal year may be obligated by the Secretary during the fiscal year in which amounts are received.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 213. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, proceeds or revenues derived from enhanced-use leasing activities (including disposal) may be deposited into the ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects'' accounts and be used for construction (including site acquisition and disposition), alterations, and improvements of any medical facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Such sums as realized are in addition to the amount provided for in ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects''.

SEC. 214. Amounts made available under ''Medical Services'' are available—

(1) for furnishing recreational facilities, supplies, and equipment; and

(2) for funeral expenses, burial expenses, and other expenses incidental to funerals and burials for beneficiaries receiving care in the Department.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 215. Such sums as may be deposited to the Medical Care Collections Fund pursuant to section 1729A of title 38, United States Code, may be transferred to ''Medical Services'', to remain available until expended for the purposes of that account.

SEC. 216. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into agreements with Indian tribes and tribal organizations which are party to the Alaska Native Health Compact with the Indian Health Service, and Indian tribes and tribal organizations serving rural Alaska which have entered into contracts with the Indian Health Service under the Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act, to provide healthcare, including behavioral health and dental care. The Secretary shall require participating veterans and facilities to comply with all appropriate rules and regulations, as established by the Secretary. The term ''rural Alaska'' shall mean those lands sited within the external boundaries of the Alaska Native regions specified in sections 7(a)(1)–(4) and (7)–(12) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1606), and those lands within the Alaska Native regions specified in sections 7(a)(5) and 7(a)(6) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1606), which are not within the boundaries of the municipality of Anchorage, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the Kenai Peninsula Borough or the Matanuska Susitna Borough.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 217. Such sums as may be deposited to the Department of Veterans Affairs Capital

Asset Fund pursuant to section 8118 of title 38, United States Code, may be transferred to the ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects'' accounts, to remain available until expended for the purposes of these accounts.

SEC. 218. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to implement any policy prohibiting the Directors of the Veterans Integrated Services Networks from conducting outreach or marketing to enroll new veterans within their respective Networks.

SEC. 219. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a quarterly report on the financial status of the Veterans Health Administration.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 220. Amounts made available under the ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', ''Medical Facilities'', ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration'', ''General Administration'', and ''National Cemetery Administration'' accounts for fiscal year 2015 may be transferred to or from the ''Information Technology Systems'' account: *Provided*, That before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued.

SEC. 221. Of the amounts made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015, in this Act or any other Act, under the ''Medical Facilities'' account for nonrecurring maintenance, not more than 20 percent of the funds made available shall be obligated during the last 2 months of that fiscal year: *Provided*, That the Secretary may waive this requirement after providing written notice to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 222. Of the amounts appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015 for ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', ''Medical Facilities'', ''Construction, Minor Projects'', and ''Information Technology Systems'', up to $252,366,000, plus reimbursements, may be transferred to the Joint Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund, established by section 1704 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 3571) and may be used for operation of the facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500): *Provided*, That additional funds may be transferred from accounts designated in this section to the Joint Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund upon written notification by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 223. Such sums as may be deposited to the Medical Care Collections Fund pursuant to section 1729A of title 38, United States Code, for healthcare provided at facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500) shall also be available: (1) for transfer to the Joint Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund, established by section 1704 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 3571); and (2) for operations of the facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500).

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 224. Of the amounts available in this title for ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', and ''Medical Facilities'', a minimum of $15,000,000 shall be transferred to the DOD–VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund, as authorized by section 8111(d) of title 38, United States Code, to remain available until expended, for any purpose authorized by section 8111 of title 38, United States Code.

(INCLUDING RESCISSIONS OF FUNDS)

SEC. 225. (a) Of the funds appropriated in title II of division J of Public Law 113–76, the following amounts which become available on October 1, 2014, are hereby rescinded from the following accounts in the amounts specified:

(1) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Services'', $1,400,000,000.

(2) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Support and Compliance'', $100,000,000.

(3) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Facilities'', $250,000,000.

(b) In addition to amounts provided elsewhere in this Act, an additional amount is appropriated to the following accounts in the amounts specified to remain available until September 30, 2016:

(1) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Services'', $1,400,000,000.

(2) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Support and Compliance'', $100,000,000.

(3) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Facilities'', $250,000,000.

SEC. 226. The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of all bid savings in major construction projects that total at least $5,000,000, or 5 percent of the programmed amount of the project, whichever is less: *Provided*, That such notification shall occur within 14 days of a contract identifying the programmed amount: *Provided further*, That the Secretary shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress 14 days prior to the obligation of such bid savings and shall describe the anticipated use of such savings.

SEC. 227. The scope of work for a project included in ''Construction, Major Projects'' may not be increased above the scope specified for that project in the original justification data provided to the Congress as part of the request for appropriations.

SEC. 228. The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall provide on a quarterly basis to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress notification of any single national outreach and awareness marketing campaign in which obligations exceed $2,000,000.

SEC. 229. The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a reprogramming request if at any point during fiscal year 2015, the funding allocated for a medical care initiative identified in the fiscal year 2015 expenditure plan is adjusted by more than $25,000,000 from the allocation shown in the corresponding congressional budget justification. Such a reprogramming request may go forward only if the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress approve the request or if a period of 14 days has elapsed.

SEC. 230. Of the funds provided to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015 for ''Medical Services'' and ''Medical Support and Compliance'', a maximum of $8,371,000 may be obligated from the ''Medical Services'' account and a maximum of $114,703,000 may be obligated from the ''Medical Support and Compliance'' account for the VistA Evolution and electronic health record interoperability projects: *Provided*, That funds in addition to these amounts may be obligated for the VistA Evolution and electronic health record interoperability projects upon written notification by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 231. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide written notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress 15 days prior to organizational changes which result in the transfer of 25 or more full-time equivalents from one organizational unit of the Department of Veterans Affairs to another.

Mr. CULBERSON (during the reading). Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the remainder of the bill through page 53, line 25, be considered as read, printed in the RECORD, and open to amendment at any point in order to expedite the process.

The CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

SEC. 232. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to award a contract to any contractor if the past performance of the contractor resulted in the completion of a constructon project at a facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs more than 24 months after the original agreed-upon completion date for the project.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 233. Of the unobligated balances available to the Department of Veterans Affairs from prior year discretionary appropriations (other than appropriations designated by law as being for an emergency requirement) $38,000,000 are hereby rescinded.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TERRY

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 54, after line 12, insert the following:

SEC. 224. None of the funds made available in this Act for ''Department of Veterans Affairs—Departmental Administration—General Administration'' for administrative expenses of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may be obligated or expended until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs meets with the Nebraska delegation to discuss alternative options for the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital planned for construction in Omaha, Nebraska.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve a point of order on the gentleman's amendment.

The CHAIR. A point of order is reserved.

The gentleman from Nebraska is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Chairman, I first want to thank my colleagues on the VA-MilCon Subcommittee—in particular, Mr. FORTENBERRY and Mr. CULBERSON and their staff—for their excellent work on this legislation in helping me facilitate this amendment and discussion.

I also want to thank, of course, the committee staff, who has just been wonderful.

□ 1545

My amendment would require that no funds in this appropriations bill shall be used for the administrative expenses until the Secretary meets with the Nebraska delegation. The Secretary's calendar should never be so busy that he cannot meet with an entire delegation.

Mr. Chairman, on June 6 of 2013—almost 11 months ago—our delegation asked for a meeting with Secretary Shinseki. When I say ''delegation,'' I mean all of the House Members and both Senators signed on to this letter, which I will submit for the RECORD.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, June 6, 2013.

Hon. ERIC K. SHINSEKI,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY SHINSEKI: We respectfully ask for a personal meeting with you to discuss the current state of the Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in Omaha, Nebraska.

We are pleased that Omaha is on the VA's construction list and as such will someday have a new facility built. However, as number 18 out of 20 on the VA's major construction projects list, the reality seems to indicate that there is a small chance a new facility will be built by the end of the decade. As the condition of the current facility continues to deteriorate and the new hospital's timeline continues to slide, veterans in the Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System will be placed at risk of not receiving the proper health care that they have come to know and deserve.

The situation with the Omaha VA hospital is dire. The management and staff are doing their best, but unforeseen circumstances have provided obstacles to ensuring our veterans receive quality care. For example, operating rooms were closed in March 2013 due to failing humidifiers. Though the situation is being addressed, we are concerned that the aging facility will only continue to face operational challenges and will continue to require significant maintenance in order to keep it functioning until a new facility can be built. Another major issue is the condition of the boilers, air conditioners, and emergency generators. Without replacement soon the Omaha VA Hospital could face major shutdowns for complex and costly replacements of this equipment.

The veterans of Nebraska and western Iowa, who rely on this declining facility, need to know that the VA has valid and viable plans in place to continue the excellent care they receive without avoidable interruptions or endangerment to their health and welfare. We ask that you meet with us to discuss these items so we, as the Nebraska delegation, can communicate to and alleviate the concerns of our veteran constituents.

Several questions we would like to discuss with you include:

How does the VA establish funding priorities for construction of new VA hospitals and whether or not the major construction list will be re-evaluated based on the current status of existing facilities?

When is Omaha's facility reasonably expected to begin physical construction?

What is the VA's plan to fund unexpected and required repairs to continue Omaha's operations until a new facility is completed?

What is preventing the VA from placing higher priority on seriously degrading facilities such as the Omaha VA hospital?

What are other possible solutions/options for a new hospital and is the VA open to exploring these possibilities?

Please let us know as soon as possible as to your availability to meet in June. Time is of the essence. Please ask your staff to coordinate with Katie Amacio, scheduler for Senator Johanns, at kathleen_amacio@johanns.senate.gov. Ms. Amacio will coordinate with the rest of the delegation.

We look forward to working with you to best serve our nation's cherished heroes, our veterans.

Sincerely,

LEE TERRY,
Member of Congress,
ADRIAN SMITH,
Member of Congress,
JEFF FORTENBERRY,
Member of Congress,
MIKE JOHANNS,
United States Senator,
DEB FISCHER,
United States Senator.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, November 1, 2013.

Hon. ERIC K. SHINSEKI,
Secretary of Veterans Affairs,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY SHINSEKI: On June 6, 2013, we wrote you a letter requesting a meeting to discuss the Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in Omaha, Nebraska and to discuss options regarding the current hospital situation, as well as a timeline and options for the new facility. We would like to meet with you as soon as possible to talk with you about our concerns.

We appreciate that your staff offered to meet with us. However, the situation at our VA hospital is so grave that this meeting requires your personal attention. As noted in our letter of June 6th, the condition of the current facility is problematic, while the new hospital's timeline continues to slide. Veterans in the Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System may be placed at risk of not receiving the proper health care that they have come to know and deserve if something is not done very soon to rectify the current situation.

Our communications with your congressional affairs staff have been numerous in the hopes that we could work to find a mutually agreeable time to meet. It is now the beginning of November and we are still anxiously awaiting the opportunity to meet. In the meantime, our veterans continue to seek treatment at a facility that has outlived its usefulness. Given your longstanding service to our country, we know that you share the goal of giving the best possible care to those who have served our nation so bravely. We respectfully request that a meeting be scheduled as early as possible.

Please contact Congressman Terry's Chief of Staff, Mark Anderson, to arrange a meeting. He can be reached via email at Mark.Anderson@mail.house.gov. He will coordinate a date and time for our meeting with you.

We believe that you are as interested as we are in serving those who deserve it most, our nation's veterans who depend upon the Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System. We know that we can work together to solve the problems at the Omaha facility and begin making the dreams of a new hospital a reality.

We look forward to hearing from your office in the coming days.

Sincerely,

LEE TERRY,
Member of Congress,
JEFF FORTENBERRY,
Member of Congress,
ADRIAN SMITH,
Member of Congress,
MIKE JOHANNS,
United States Senate,
DEB FISCHER,
United States Senate.

Mr. TERRY. Now, the purpose of this inquiry was to discuss some health care alternatives for the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System. Our hospital for 170,000 area veterans is in serious disrepair—boilers, HVAC, emergency generators. The very sewer and water pipes are literally duct-taped together. We have heard that it is the second worst hospital infrastructure in all of their hospital inventory. Even last March, the operating rooms had to be closed down due to failing humidifiers. We are talking about the basic functioning of this hospital that is out of date.

Without replacement soon, the hospital could face additional major shutdowns for the complex and costly replacements of this infrastructure. Currently, we are on the list to be built somewhere around '18-'20, but the reality is, for years now, the list hasn't moved. Now our VA employees are being told that it will be somewhere in the 2021–2022 range. I fear it will be even later than that before the new inpatient tower can be built.

Why do we need to talk to the general, or to Secretary Shinseki, about this hospital?

It is that there are alternatives available in our community that we need to discuss with the decision maker.

I will tell you that, even though we made the request in June of 2013—as we head into May of 2014 now—they did get back to us in November of '13 when they said that we could meet with a low-level employee. So the entire delegation rewrote a letter in November, rejecting a meeting with the low-level employee. We need to meet with the Secretary, the decision maker, on these types of alternatives that would be available and that are, frankly, much cheaper than the $600 million budgeted.

The Secretary then did call back in December when the House was out of session and when the Senate was wrapping up, I think it was, the debt resolution issue for Friday, but even the Senators left on Wednesday. They at late notice scheduled a meeting, but that was when no one was here. We have made numerous requests for additional meetings to discuss these great options that would be available. Some of them would involve a leaseback type of provision by which people would put up the money, build the hospital, and then lease it back, reducing the burdens on the VA's budget, but we have no one to talk to. That is why I am saying let's hold back the administrative budget until the head of the administration for the VA meets with the Nebraska delegation on this really important safety and health issue for our veterans.

I yield to my colleague, JEFF FORTENBERRY, from Lincoln, Nebraska.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I thank my friend and colleague, Congressman TERRY, for his steadfast commitment in trying to find some creative resolution for this problem.

Mr. Chairman, he is very right in outlining this timeline of frustrations that we have had in dealing with the VA and in simply trying to get a hearing to discuss innovative ideas that are potentially out there to resolve this very difficult situation that we have in giving veterans the highest service that they deserve.

I did want to mention to my colleague and thank Chairman CULBERSON as well for working with me on getting some language in the current bill that, hopefully, gets us out of this dilemma and reframes it.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. MCCLINTOCK). The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Nebraska is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to read the language that is in this bill.

It reads:

Alternative Financing:

The committee is concerned about meeting the need for access to high-quality veterans' health care facilities, including in rural areas where access to facilities, including clinics and hospitals, is more limited. The committee directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to work collaboratively with other executive branch agencies with substantial construction portfolios, private sector contractors and other nongovernmental experts, together with the appropriate congressional committees, to explore the feasibility of employing new funding mechanisms to meet the need for such facilities, including but not limited to private development leaseback arrangements, and to provide a report on their conclusions to the committee no later than September 30 of this year.

So it is right around the corner. We did not want this to linger any longer.

A bit of a new development I should bring up as well is that the VA Secretary did appear before our committee. I laid out some of these concerns. He appeared to be open to new ideas and suggestions, but we wanted to fortify this by putting this language in the underlying bill. Hopefully, this gets us some resolution quickly. If we don't resolve this, there is something called ''opportunity cost.'' Veterans who deserve the highest quality care may not be getting that care over the longer term when we could be doing something creative right now and innovative to build out, potentially, a new facility or rehab older ones to modern standards so that we can ensure they get the best and highest quality care. This puts us, hopefully, on a pathway to creating new and innovative ideas to simply move past the old way of doing things, which makes us wait and wait and wait for who knows how long.

I want to thank my colleague for, again, bringing awareness to this issue.

Mr. TERRY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I yield to the gentleman from Nebraska.

Mr. TERRY. Thank you, Mr. FORTENBERRY.

I think the language is innovative and absolutely necessary, and I compliment you on your perseverance on this issue as well and on the insertion of this language into the bill.

Mr. Chairman, the lend-lease or the leaseback provisions could be helpful. There are at least two community options that, I think, are highly credible options. One of them would be a leaseback type of option. The VA does that on clinics, but they refuse to do it on hospitals.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. And, by the way, on housing. As the Secretary pointed out, the VA does this on housing as well.

Mr. Chairman, there are creative options out there that do not give the government a longer term budgetary risk, but they nonetheless help us move past a process that seems to be very stuck—simply putting money under the mattress until we finally get enough someday way into the future when we can get the veterans the services that they need.

Mr. TERRY. The Secretary mentioned he was open to the language that you have inserted, which is a great step forward. Was he open to actually meeting with the delegation on the options that our community is putting forward?

Mr. FORTENBERRY. We discussed not necessarily the specific language. We, in working with the committee, came up with this. Again, I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON for his leadership in helping craft this. The Secretary expressed a general openness toward creative thinking about alternative models that are already being deployed, as you rightly recognized, in clinics as well as in veterans' housing. I did not raise the issue about meeting with us, but hopefully, again, this conversation and this language will help further that cause.

Mr. TERRY. I am intending, Mr. Chairman, to withdraw this amendment at the end of the gentleman's 5 minutes; but I do want to encourage General, Secretary Shinseki to actually sit down and listen to these options. We are not there to berate him or the VA but to simply say that our community is serious about finding solutions in working with the VA, and Mr. FORTENBERRY has now inserted language that would encourage that.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Again, I want to thank my colleague, LEE TERRY, for his steadfast commitment to this important issue.

Mr. Chairman, I think we should all be on the same page. Everybody shares the general goal and mission as to how to get this new hospital potentially in a much better situation either with a new facility or with something that is rehabilitated to modern standards. We have got some innovative ways to do this.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) withdraws his amendment.

There was no objection.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. LAMALFA

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 54, after line 12, insert the following:

SEC. ____. If Department of Veterans Affairs casework is brokered out to another office of the Department from its original submission site, a caseworker in a congressional office may contact the brokered office to receive an update on the constituent's case, and that office of the Department is required to update the congressional staffer regardless of their thoughts on jurisdiction.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve a point of order on the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. A point of order is reserved on the amendment.

The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. I appreciate Chairman CULBERSON for allowing the time here today on this important topic.

Mr. Chairman, the VA continues to broker cases as a means to lessen the backlog that many Members are clamoring about. This amendment I am offering with my colleague, Mr. HUFFMAN, who wished to speak today, is very important to both of us and to many of my other colleagues.

When a case is brokered out of the Oakland VA office to the San Diego VA office, for example, San Diego will tell my staff that they are not allowed to update them on the status of a case because it is not in San Diego's jurisdiction to do so, they basically claim. We know there are no VA rules in law that state that caseworkers cannot be updated on a veteran's case.

This amendment simply states, if a congressional office is looking for an update on a veteran's case that has been brokered to another VA office, that the staff will be given a status update with no jurisdictional concerns.

As Members, we serve our constituents. It is a reasonable request that caseworkers in our offices should be allowed to receive an update on a case regardless of where that case has been sent so that this VA backlog can be solved. Our veterans should not suffer because of this backlog. This issue of jurisdiction needs to be clear to all VA facilities across the U.S. so that our veterans are getting the answers they need through our casework staff. If we are going to continue to broker cases, then the brokered office must be communicating with our staff members, who are trying to get the answers that they need to the veterans.

Mr. Chairman, at this time, I would like to yield to my colleague from California (Mr. GARAMENDI).

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Chairman, let's see. There are 435 of us in this House and maybe another 100 over on

the other side, give or take a few who may be retiring or who are on their way to other jobs. Each and every one of us has constituents come to us, seeking help and seeking our assistance in solving a problem. It is our work. That is what a Representative is. We represent the people in our districts, and we help solve their problems.

The veterans have a very special place in our offices, in my own notion of what I am supposed to do as a Representative. I know they have in Mr. LAMALFA's and, quite probably, in the offices of every other Member of this House. We have over 130 active cases with veterans in our districts, working through the problems that they have with the Veterans Administration. I must tell you that one thing that sets me off is when my staff tells me that we are not able to contact the Veterans Administration because they have sent the case to another office and that that office won't respond to us.

□ 1600

We talked about this amongst ourselves, Mr. LAMALFA and I and other Representatives in our area, and, frankly, we have had enough. We are the legislature of the United States Government. And the Veterans Administration has a task, and they had better be responsible and responsive to veterans and to those who represent veterans, namely the 435 Members of this House. It is part of our job.

When the Veterans Administration office in some far-off land or county or other State has been given a file from our district to handle and to work through because of an overload in our area and then they don't respond to us, then they get this piece of legislation.

Mr. LAMALFA, thank you very much. This ought to become law, notwithstanding the objection. We thank you for carrying this bill. Let's make this part of a law, and let's make this organization responsive to us and to our constituents.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate my colleagues. This has been a bipartisan effort on a lot of VA issues here today we are seeing, which is a really good sign.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me some time to speak on this subject. I will be withdrawing this amendment at this time, but we will be following up on this issue via other means soon, because it is very key that we have the ability as the elected officials and our staff to communicate fully with all aspects of the VA, especially since there is, as I mentioned earlier, no law or no rule stating that we cannot have this but more, maybe, roadblocks put in place by certain staff.

Mr. Chair, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw my amendment at this time.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Nevada is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. TITUS. As the ranking member of the Disability Assistance Memorial Affairs Subcommittee of the Veterans' Affairs authorizing committee, I rise today in support of this appropriations bill, and I thank the chairman and the ranking member for the hard work that they put into this bill.

One of the main reasons that I support it is because it furthers our goal of eliminating the VA benefits backlog, which is an issue our committee has worked on daily for the last year and a half. One of my top priorities is ensuring that our Nation's heroes receive all the benefits they have earned in a timely fashion.

While I support this bill, I would like to take just a minute or two to raise an issue that is troubling to me and hope to bring it to the attention of the other Members of the House.

I know many of my colleagues will be deeply saddened to learn that some veterans and their families across the country are being denied the benefits that they earned while serving our Nation. A recent example of this discrimination against some of our Nation's veterans was highlighted in a report by CBS News just last week.

Seventy-four-year-old Madelynn Taylor of Boise, Idaho, proudly served her country in the United States Navy for 6 years. She lost her spouse in 2012 and soon after began the task of making arrangements to ensure that the two of them would be together in death just as they were in life. Being a veteran, Madelynn had the right to be interred at a State or national veterans cemetery. Since the closest national cemetery to Boise was nearly 8 hours away in western Oregon, Madelynn decided to inquire about a joint spot and memorial wall with her and her spouse's ashes to lay in rest together, just as hundreds of other couples have done, at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in her hometown of Boise.

The Idaho State Veterans Cemetery was opened a decade ago with 100 percent of the funding for the design, construction, and equipment costs coming from a Federal grant from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' State Cemetery Grants Program, and the cemetery continues to receive Federal funding for operations.

When Madelynn brought the necessary paperwork, including her discharge papers and marriage certificate, she was told that she and her spouse would not be allowed to be buried together.

Why, you ask, was she denied this right? The answer is that Madelynn is a lesbian. Idaho State law does not recognize the legality of a marriage between Madelynn and her wife, Jean, and therefore is denying the couple the honor and dignity earned through Madelynn's service as a member of the United States Navy.

Madelynn said this of her situation:

> I just feel that it's the right place for me. I am a veteran, so they should let me . . . in fact, they would let me alone be in that crypt, but I don't want to be alone. I want Jean with me.

We rightfully elevate our veterans and their families because of their service and sacrifice, yet today some veterans across the country face discrimination by the States and the Federal Government they sought to defend. No veteran or their family should be treated as second-class citizens.

Nearly a year after the landmark Supreme Court decision to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act, which effectively extended Federal benefits to legally married couples, we see the Nation's gay and lesbian veterans face obstacles accessing the benefits that they have earned and rightfully deserve.

While in uniform, our LGBT soldiers have access to the full complement of benefits available to members of the armed services. The second they transition out of the military, they are forced to leave these benefits behind.

I have introduced legislation to end this disservice, and I invite my colleagues to join me in supporting this important effort.

Mr. Chairman, today we debate legislation to fund the critical work of the VA and the earned benefits of our Nation's heroes and their families. My hope is that this body will give equal attention to all our veterans and their families and end the discrimination they experience when seeking benefits, including the right to be buried with their legally married, same-sex spouses.

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

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Chair, I move to strike the last word in order to engage in a colloquy.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from North Carolina is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Chairman, we are all aware of the tragic backlog that deeply affects so many of our Nation's heroes all across this country, and particularly in my district back home in North Carolina. Fixing this issue needs to be one of the highest priorities of Congress and this administration. We owe it to our veterans, and I know that many of my colleagues agree that we owe them to do this.

However, the solution is not necessarily to continually throw money at the problem. We have done that for years without the results we are looking for. The reality is the fiscal situation we find ourselves in today means that we can no longer afford to be so shortsighted in our approach.

In order to reform the VA—or any other department, for that matter—we need to have a clear understanding of what costs are associated with running their programs so we can evaluate their effectiveness and root out those that are wasteful, duplicitous, and are underperforming.

Mr. Chairman, I know you have been a leader on this issue and have tried for years to get from the VA a clear breakdown of what their administrative costs are. Is that correct?

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HUDSON. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. Yes, I have. It is an ongoing problem trying to get any of the agencies to tell you what their administrative costs are. It is extraordinarily important. I really appreciate you bringing it to our attention. We are going to continue to work on this with you and other Members to ensure that our constituents' hard-earned tax dollars are spent wisely.

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Chair, I thank the gentleman for his hard work and commitment, and I share his frustration. I have had a very difficult time, as well, trying to understand how the VA deals with its overhead. In fact, I have got a story I just heard from a veteran in my district that is probably not unique.

This gentleman went to the VA center in Winston-Salem for an appeals hearing. A veterans service officer, one of the very hardworking veterans service officers around the country, accompanied him to this meeting. He sat down with the VA employee, and he asked the employee: Do you have my file? I don't see it sitting on your desk. The employee said: Well, we computerized all the files, so I have got it all here in the computer. The veteran said: Well, just so I know where you are, which page are you looking at? Somewhat sheepishly, the VA employee said: Well, actually, I don't know how to access the files in the computer.

It is outrageous. It got worse from there.

They went forward with the hearing. At the conclusion of the hearing, the employee turned off a tape recorder and popped out the cassette. The veteran said: Well, what do you do with that cassette? He said: Well, we send that to San Diego so they can transcribe it. In about 6 weeks, we will get the transcription back and then we can start processing your claim.

Mr. Chairman, this is not what we intended when we asked that we go to a computerized VA system, and it is outrageous that our veterans are having to see these kind of delays. I would just ask that you work with us to try to resolve this problem.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chair, if the gentleman will yield, I would point out I have a software application on here called Dragon Naturally Speaking. You just talk into it and it transcribes it instantly. As we used to say, ''Get with the nineties,'' get with the modern era and just download a few apps on the computers.

We will bird-dog them relentlessly. That is absurd.

Mr. HUDSON. It is absurd.

I appreciate your commitment to this, the time you put into it. Our veterans deserve the best we can give them. They deserve to be treated with the highest respect, and they deserve to not have to wait these extraordinary amounts of time just to be heard.

Mr. Chairman, I commit to working with you to continue to deal with this issue, to take care of our veterans not just in North Carolina's Eighth District, but around the country.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina. Mr. Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, and I will commend the chairman of the committee for his efforts on this.

This legislation not only provides the necessary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs' operation, but it also sets a clear priority of addressing the massive problems at hand at the VA. We have read the recent news article saying we are aware as a Congress of all the problems that we are seeing in the VA. For too long, the heroes that have served this country have been mistreated, overlooked, or flatout ignored by the VA. When these brave men and women signed up to defend our Nation, they were promised to be taken care of when they returned home. However, today we see less than adequate care—doctor's visit wait times stretching months and, in some cases, years, and hundreds of thousands of backlog benefit cases.

The incident the gentleman from North Carolina just talked about is prevalent all across this land in every congressional district, including mine. Mr. Chairman, when I talk to the veterans back home in my district, I hear loss of confidence in a government that promised to be there for them. I hear from war veterans who are just plain giving up on the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The latest report on VA claims from April 28, 2014, shows there are almost 600,000 pending claims with over 300,000 considered backlogged that have been pending for over 125 days. Mr. Chairman, that is 125 days without an answer or resolution that these veterans will never get back.

Just in my office, we have seen a multitude of cases that demonstrate the current ongoing crisis at the VA. One Korean war veteran has been working with my office on a Decision Review Officer review for over 18 months now. This is a decision process that was supposed to be quicker than a Board of Veterans' Appeal in Washington. After waiting for more than a year for a meeting before his appeal, he couldn't wait any longer and just asked for the decision to be with the information that was at hand. While he is still waiting for an answer, I am praying for a resolution for that veteran.

We have seen other instances where we were able to send documentation on behalf of constituents to various Veterans Administration offices, for the very same offices to turn around months later and ask for the same information again. Is this any way to treat the men and women who sacrificed their lives to defend the very freedoms our country enjoys?

Thankfully, this legislation we are considering today makes a stride in the right direction by concentrating efforts to end the current backlog; holding the VA offices accountable through office performance measurements, not just awarding bonuses for someone when the facilities are in need of some attention, we will say; and increasing medical services for veterans, and that is the most important part.

This bill prioritizes the timely and accurate exchange of medical data, updating the VA health records system, and ensuring the system is operable with the Department of Defense.

This is not a silver bullet, Mr. Chairman, and we still have a long way to go to get the VA clicking and ticking again, but I hope we can use that momentum to continue working towards fulfilling the promises made to our veterans and improving the lives of our Nation's heroes. They deserve it.

May God bless our Nation's troops and veterans, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

TITLE III

RELATED AGENCIES

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses, not otherwise provided for, of the American Battle Monuments Commission, including the acquisition of land or interest in land in foreign countries; purchases and repair of uniforms for caretakers of national cemeteries and monuments outside of the United States and its territories and possessions; rent of office and garage space in foreign countries; purchase (one-for-one replacement basis only) and hire of passenger motor vehicles; not to exceed $7,500 for official reception and representation expenses; and insurance of official motor vehicles in foreign countries, when required by law of such countries, $75,000,000, to remain available until expended.

FOREIGN CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS ACCOUNT

For necessary expenses, not otherwise provided for, of the American Battle Monuments Commission, such sums as may be necessary, to remain available until expended, for purposes authorized by section 2109 of title 36, United States Code.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses for the operation of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims as authorized by sections 7251 through 7298 of title 38, United States Code, $31,386,000: *Provided*, That $2,500,000 shall be available for the purpose of providing financial assistance as described, and in accordance with the process and reporting procedures set forth, under this heading in Public Law 102–229.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE—CIVIL
CEMETERIAL EXPENSES, ARMY
SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses for maintenance, operation, and improvement of Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, including the purchase or lease of passenger motor vehicles for replacement on a one-for-one basis only, and not to exceed $1,000 for official reception and representation expenses, $61,881,000, of which not to exceed $7,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2016. In addition, such sums as may be necessary for parking maintenance, repairs and replacement, to be derived from the ''Lease of Department of Defense Real Property for Defense Agencies'' account.

ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME
TRUST FUND

For expenses necessary for the Armed Forces Retirement Home to operate and maintain the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Washington, District of Columbia, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Gulfport, Mississippi, to be paid from funds available in the Armed Forces Retirement Home Trust Fund, $63,400,000, of which $1,000,000 shall remain available until expended for construction and renovation of the physical plants at the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Washington, District of Columbia, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Gulfport, Mississippi.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION

SEC. 301. Funds appropriated in this Act under the heading ''Department of Defense—Civil, Cemeterial Expenses, Army'', may be provided to Arlington County, Virginia, for the relocation of the federally owned water main at Arlington National Cemetery, making additional land available for ground burials.

TITLE IV
GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 401. No part of any appropriation contained in this Act shall remain available for obligation beyond the current fiscal year unless expressly so provided herein.

SEC. 402. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for any program, project, or activity, when it is made known to the Federal entity or official to which the funds are made available that the program, project, or activity is not in compliance with any Federal law relating to risk assessment, the protection of private property rights, or unfunded mandates.

SEC. 403. No part of any funds appropriated in this Act shall be used by an agency of the executive branch, other than for normal and recognized executive-legislative relationships, for publicity or propaganda purposes, and for the preparation, distribution, or use of any kit, pamphlet, booklet, publication, radio, television, or film presentation designed to support or defeat legislation pending before Congress, except in presentation to Congress itself.

SEC. 404. All departments and agencies funded under this Act are encouraged, within the limits of the existing statutory authorities and funding, to expand their use of ''E-Commerce'' technologies and procedures in the conduct of their business practices and public service activities.

SEC. 405. Unless stated otherwise, all reports and notifications required by this Act shall be submitted to the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

SEC. 406. None of the funds made available in this Act may be transferred to any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government except pursuant to a transfer made by, or transfer authority provided in, this or any other appropriations Act.

SEC. 407. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for a project or program named for an individual serving as a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner of the United States House of Representatives.

SEC. 408. (a) Any agency receiving funds made available in this Act, shall, subject to subsections (b) and (c), post on the public Web site of that agency any report required to be submitted by the Congress in this or any other Act, upon the determination by the head of the agency that it shall serve the national interest.

(b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to a report if—

(1) the public posting of the report compromises national security; or

(2) the report contains confidential or proprietary information.

(c) The head of the agency posting such report shall do so only after such report has been made available to the requesting Committee or Committees of Congress for no less than 45 days.

SEC. 409. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to maintain or establish a computer network unless such network blocks the viewing, downloading, and exchanging of pornography.

(b) Nothing in subsection (a) shall limit the use of funds necessary for any Federal, State, tribal, or local law enforcement agency or any other entity carrying out criminal investigations, prosecution, or adjudication activities.

SEC. 410. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used by an agency of the executive branch to pay for first-class travel by an employee of the agency in contravention of sections 301–10.122 through 301–10.124 of title 41, Code of Federal Regulations.

SEC. 411. (a) IN GENERAL.—None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Defense in this Act may be used to construct, renovate, or expand any facility in the United States, its territories, or possessions to house any individual detained at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, for the purposes of detention or imprisonment in the custody or under the control of the Department of Defense.

(b) The prohibition in subsection (a) shall not apply to any modification of facilities at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

(c) An individual described in this subsection is any individual who, as of June 24, 2009, is located at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and who—

(1) is not a citizen of the United States or a member of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

(2) is—

(A) in the custody or under the effective control of the Department of Defense; or

(B) otherwise under detention at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

□ 1615

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. MORAN

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 60, beginning on line 10, strike section 411.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, this amendment would strike section 411, which specifically restricts the Defense Department from transferring Guantanamo detainees to the United States.

Striking section 411 would enable the U.S. military to be able to make the most responsible decisions on transferring the 77 detainees who have been cleared by our intelligence community and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to be able to go to their home countries and bring those not cleared for release to the United States to be charged, tried, and sentenced.

The Obama administration has made some real progress on this issue over the last year, but it is still the case that Guantanamo is a rallying cry for extremists around the world, and until we transfer and try these detainees, there is no denying that Guantanamo is in fact hurting our national security.

We need to reevaluate our response to the long-term threat of terrorism and realize that policies that mock the rule of law make it more likely, rather than less likely, that we will be attacked again.

How can we expect Americans who are captured abroad to be accorded the right to be sentenced and brought to trial when we hold 154 prisoners in Guantanamo without charge and without trial?

Some of my colleagues are going to argue that detaining or trying suspected terrorists in the United States would endanger national security, but it is not the case. More than 400 defendants charged with crimes related to international terrorism have been successfully convicted in the United States since 9/11. That includes the Times Square bomber; the shoe bomber; and Zacarias Moussaoui, who was tried and convicted in my congressional district for his role in the 9/11 attack.

All of them are in our prisons here in the United States. Most Americans don't know that because there haven't been any security incidents. In fact, more than 300 individuals convicted of crimes related to international terrorism are currently incarcerated in 98 Federal prisons within the United States, with no escapes and no attempts to free them.

There are six Defense Department facilities less than half full where Guantanamo detainees could be held here in the United States.

The current approach of military commissions has proven unworkable because many of these prisoners merit a trial, but they are not getting the kind of trial that can withstand scrutiny. In fact, the only two guilty verdicts these commissions issued were both overturned.

Keeping Guantanamo open is expensive. We are currently spending $2.67 million per detainee each year at Guantanamo, compared to $34,046 per

inmate at a high security Federal prison here in the United States.

This year alone, the Defense Department estimates that it will spend $443 million in operations and personnel costs to operate this detention facility.

When we are facing the negative effects of sequestration, it just does not make sense to continue what is in effect a permanent scar on our judicial system.

In conclusion, the political and legal expediency of the detention center at Guantanamo has not been worth the cost to America's reputation around the world, nor to the erosion of our own legal and ethical standards here at home.

I support the President in his recent statements, and I encourage the Members of this body to support this amendment. It is the right thing to do morally, ethically, and legally.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the gentleman's amendment.

We have presented this piece of legislation to the House in a bipartisan fashion. We have got unanimous support for it. This is one of those areas where we have an honest but earnest philosophical disagreement.

This is something my good friend from Virginia (Mr. MORAN), has been pursuing over the years, but it is, again, something the constituents I represent, the folks of Texas, I know oppose the idea of giving constitutional rights to enemy soldiers captured on foreign battlefields, especially these cowardly terrorists who hide behind women and children and launch sneak attacks against our men and women in uniform.

We have asked the Congressional Research Service to attempt to tell us when, if ever, constitutional rights have been granted to enemy soldiers captured on foreign battlefields. The Congressional Research Service tells us the only example they can find is Manuel Noriega, the dictator of Panama, who was captured during the Bush 41 administration and brought to trial in Florida.

The individuals at Guantanamo Bay are the most dangerous, radical individuals that have been captured during the war on terror. These folks are extremely dangerous.

Any evidence that has been gathered, for example, even if they were to be transferred to the United States and given a criminal trial under the Constitution, which I strenuously object to, but even if they were brought to the United States and put on trial, how would any of the evidence gathered against them in Guantanamo be used to convict them?

So this presents unsurmountable problems and is a divisive issue that is going to cause a tremendous amount of disagreement among the Members of Congress on a bill that has enjoyed unanimous and enthusiastic support from everyone in this body to make sure that our veterans and our men and women in uniform are taken care of.

It is essential that this amendment be defeated in order to make sure that enemy soldiers are not given the protections of the United States Constitution. It is fundamentally something I strenuously disagree with, as do my constituents, and I urge the Members of this House to reject this amendment. And I hope to also have the support of the people of Georgia in opposing this amendment as well.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this amendment.

I believe we need to set the conditions for the closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo. It is in the United States' national security interest to do so.

Guantanamo has become a rallying cry. It serves as a recruitment tool for terrorists and increases the will of our enemies to fight, while reducing the will of others to work with America.

Part of the rationale for establishing Guantanamo in the first place was the misplaced idea that the facility would be beyond the law—a proposition that has been soundly rejected by the Supreme Court. As a result, continued operation of this facility creates the impression in the eyes of our allies and our enemies that the United States selectively observes the rule of law.

There is no reason that we should impose on ourselves the legal and moral problems arising from the prospects of indefinite detentions at Guantanamo.

Working through civil courts since 9/11, hundreds of individuals have been convicted of terrorism or terrorism-related offenses and are now serving long sentences in Federal prison. Not one single person has ever escaped custody.

For these reasons, I believe that the time has come to take the actions needed to initiate closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo. I think this amendment sends that strong message.

I support the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Moran-Smith-Nadler amendment.

We are told by some in the majority that enemy soldiers should not have constitutional rights. But, Mr. Chairman, a majority, concededly, of those at Guantanamo, were never involved in a hostile act against the United States, and 86 percent were turned in for bounties.

We don't know whether these people are enemy soldiers. Some of them may be and some of them are probably not. And we don't know that they are terrorists.

Those facts must be determined in a fair proceeding of some sort, but at Guantanamo there are no proceedings. They haven't managed to hold military trials. And we can't hold civilian trials there.

So we are holding people for no purpose, with no proceedings, no hearings, no opportunity, for essentially forever.

The time to close Guantanamo is now. Guantanamo is a stain on our national honor. Never mind all the foreign policy reasons why it is poisoning our relations with foreign countries and instigating terrorism against it. The fact is, it is wrong.

We are holding 154 people at Guantanamo, 77 of whom have been cleared for release. That is to say, they have been found guilty of nothing, are thought to be guilty of nothing, and have been judged not to pose any danger. Nonetheless, they are not released.

There is no reason and there is no right for us to hold them further. The others should be brought to the United States and tried for their offenses.

Mr. Chairman, I wonder which of our colleagues does not believe in the American system of justice. I wonder which one of us does not trust our own American courts. I wonder who among us does not believe in the Bill of Rights, who does not believe in the right to counsel or that people should have an opportunity to have their guilt or innocence established in court.

What we have at Guantanamo is a system that is an affront to those beliefs and to the United States.

In the last decade, we have begun to let go of our freedoms bit by bit with each new executive order, each new court decision, and yes, each new act of Congress. We have begun giving away our rights to privacy, our right to our day in court when the government harms us, and with this legislation we are continuing down the path of destroying the right to be free from imprisonment without due process of law.

Indeed, I wonder if some of the people in Guantanamo broke out of jail, inflicted injuries on American personnel in so doing, and were caught, how we would defend ourselves when they said, We were just victims of kidnapping. The United States Government kidnapped us, with no claim of right. We had every right to use force to escape an illegal kidnapping by a government acting, essentially, under no law.

I want to commend the gentleman from Virginia and the gentleman from Washington for fighting to close the detention facility at Guantanamo.

The language in this bill, without our amendment, prohibits moving any detainees into the United States and guarantees that we will continue holding people indefinitely—people who may not be terrorists, some of whom we may suspect to be terrorists, none

of whom have had a day in court to prove they are or are not terrorists. We will continue to hold them indefinitely without charge, contrary to every tradition this country stands for, contrary to any notion of due process.

Because of this momentous challenge to the founding principles of the United States that no person may be deprived of liberty without due process of law—and certainly may not be deprived of liberty indefinitely without due process of law—we must close the detention facility at Guantanamo now in order to restore our national honor. This will afford the detainees no additional constitutional rights. The Supreme Court has already ruled detainees at Guantanamo have the same constitutional rights as they would if they were brought here.

We must close this facility, try these people or let them go, and restore our national honor. Support this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Oregon is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chair, I have listened over the years to my good friend from Virginia, my friend from New York, and Mr. SMITH from Washington advance this issue. I think maybe now is the time for us to address this, if only as a going-away present. Because this is the last time Mr. MORAN is going to be able to offer this. Since he has decided to leave us for greener pastures someplace else, I think it would be fitting for us to address this directly.

□ 1630

I have great respect for my dear friend from the State of Texas who talks about what the people he represents feel about this issue; and I, with all due respect, wonder if the conversations with his constituents in Texas were like the conversations I have with my constituents in Oregon, if people knew that we are spending eight times as much to incarcerate these people as if they were in other Federal facilities.

The gentleman from Virginia talks about the space that is available now in terms of Federal facilities. Do people know that we have convicted hundreds of people suspected of terrorists acts and, under the provisions of the military tribunal, none? What do our constituents really want if they knew that fact?

The sad truth is that Americans are at greater risk because of our reckless behavior failing to close this sad chapter. The vast majority of these people probably don't pose a risk, and they certainly wouldn't pose a risk incarcerated in our maximum security facilities in the United States.

It is time to close this facility, to honor the rule of law. It strengthens our position internationally, it saves money, and it allows us to actually get some of these people who may be bad guys actually convicted.

Military tribunal doesn't work. Our courts do.

I hope that we will step up, do the right thing, approve this amendment, and give Mr. MORAN a going-away present as he leaves Congress.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Virginia will be postponed.

The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

SEC. 412. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to execute a contract for goods or services, including construction services, where the contractor has not complied with Executive Order No. 12989.

SEC. 413. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

SEC. 414. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

SEC. 415. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs to lease or purchase new light duty vehicles for any executive fleet, or for an agency's fleet inventory, except in accordance with Presidential Memorandum—Federal Fleet Performance, dated May 24, 2011.

SPENDING REDUCTION ACCOUNT

SEC. 416. The amount by which the applicable allocation of new budget authority made by the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives under section 302(b) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 exceeds the amount of proposed new budget authority is $0.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. ROTHFUS

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk printed as No. 1 in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay a performance award under section 5384 of title 5, United States Code.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to stand with our Nation's veterans and their families.

This morning, I had an opportunity to honor and thank Sergeant George Thursby. Sergeant Thursby served in the Army Air Force during World War II and was held as a prisoner of war.

Today, decades after his release, he finally received his long-overdue recognition. You should have heard the rapturous applause he received from the families, servicemembers, and citizens.

We owe veterans like Sergeant Thursby a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. That is why I rise in strong support of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act under consideration today. It is also why this amendment I am offering today is so important.

As public servants, employees of the VA have a solemn obligation to ensure that veterans receive the respect, support, and care they have earned and rightly expect.

Unfortunately, the VA has failed veterans in western Pennsylvania and across the country. At least six veterans contracted Legionnaires' disease and died because of mismanagement, mistakes, and systemic failures at the Pittsburgh VA.

William Nicklas, one of these veterans, was a loving husband, father, and grandfather. Nicklas was known for his practical jokes, his love of sports, and being the first and last person on the dance floor.

He started an auto body shop when he returned to civilian life and helped two of his sons begin their own business as contractors. More than anything, he was uncommonly dedicated to his family, his fellow servicemembers, veterans, and his country.

A proud and loyal veteran from Hampton Township in Pennsylvania's 12th District, Mr. Nicklas was a tail gunner in the Navy air-sea rescue force during World War II. Mr. Nicklas survived Guam, Saipan, and Okinawa, but fell victim to Legionnaires' disease in Pittsburgh.

Over the last year, I have worked with my colleagues to find answers and demand accountability for the families of Bill Nicklas, John Ciarolla, Clark Compston, John McChesney, Lloyd Wanstreet, and Frank ''Sonny'' Calcagno.

John Ciarolla, the first of these veterans to fall to Legionnaires' disease,

died in July 2011. Bill Nicklas, the last, died in November 2012. It has been almost 1½ years since Mr. Nicklas died and almost 3 years since Mr. Ciarolla died.

Where is the accountability? Where is the transparency?

My colleagues and I have asked VA Secretary Shinseki and Under Secretary for Health Petzel what actions they will take to hold accountable those responsible for these deaths. Officials at the VA owe the families answers, but they have provided none.

Even more outrageous, the regional director responsible for leading the Pittsburgh VA at the time of these deaths—he is now retired—was awarded and accepted the government's highest award for civil servants and a $63,000 bonus only 3 days after the inspector general found that systemic failures resulted in these deaths.

Across the Nation, the VA has demonstrated a widespread and systemic lack of accountability, according to a recent investigation by the Veterans' Affairs Committee. This has manifested itself in not just infectious disease outbreaks and preventable deaths, but also in wasteful spending and backlogged disability claims.

I thank the Veterans' Affairs Committee and Chairman JEFF MILLER for their tremendous work fighting for our Nation's veterans and promoting accountability and transparency at the VA.

Paying bonuses to senior executives of an organization with an abysmal performance record is ridiculous; yet the VA gave its senior executives bonuses totaling $2.8 million in 2011 and $2.3 million in 2012. These valuable resources should be used to ensure that our veterans receive the first-rate service and care they rightly deserve.

VA executives need to take responsibility, fix the problems, and do their jobs. Last year, I offered an amendment directing that none of the funds appropriated may be used to pay for senior executive bonuses. The amendment was adopted by voice vote and was included in last year's MilCon-VA bill, which passed the House by a vote of 421–4.

The Senate did not consider a MilCon bill last year, and the measure was not included in the omnibus. Unfortunately, 1 year has passed, and this measure is still needed.

I thank Chairman MILLER and Congressmen GOSAR, OLSON, BENISHEK, MCKINLEY, TIPTON, HUELSKAMP, CRAWFORD, KELLY, LANCE, COLLINS, LAMALFA, GOODLATTE, and MEADOWS for their support of our Nation's veterans and this amendment.

I urge my other colleagues to stand with our Nation's veterans and support increased transparency and accountability at the VA by voting ''yea'' on this amendment.

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

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this amendment. Many Members have also requested language that would ban performance bonuses for senior-level executives at the VA in response to the concerns Mr. ROTHFUS has just mentioned.

I join him in grieving for those veterans who lost their lives as a result of the Legionnaires' disease outbreak. My heart goes out to them and their families.

The authorizing committees have, indeed, as Mr. ROTHFUS says, taken action on this issue. The GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act of 2013 that passed in February contains a 5-year ban on performance bonuses for VA Senior Executive Service employees.

In February, the Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee introduced legislation that would give the VA Secretary complete authority to fire or demote Veterans Affairs senior executive employees based on performance. That is a sorely needed performance tool that the VA Secretary, I know, will use.

Mr. Chairman, we have also included language in our report reiterating that the Secretary of the VA already has all the authority they need to reward employees for good performance and withhold rewards for poor performance, just like the private sector.

That is a question I specifically asked during our hearing with the VA Secretary, and we have established that from the Secretary's own testimony, reaffirmed that in our bill itself.

The Secretary demonstrated his commitment to linking awards to performance when he withheld awards for everyone in the Veterans Benefit Administration last year because the claims backlog targets have not been met.

This is, I believe, an important amendment. I support it and urge the Members of the House to support it to send a clear signal to the VA that the Members of the United States Congress are unhappy with their performance, and they need to step it up.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, we are all outraged in regards to the claims backlog and the incidences of poor quality health services and safety. The current claims backlog is, indeed, unacceptable.

There is no question that the VA has struggled to successfully deliver one of its key missions: to provide timely ratings of disability. However, the VA has reduced the backlog by 44 percent. Should we ignore that?

It is also clear that some VA health facilities have had serious issues that put the health, safety, and well-being of our veterans at risk. This too is unacceptable. Where have these failures occurred?

It is hard to imagine how the VA leaders of these facilities could have received high performance ratings and substantial bonuses.

However, this amendment will not provide any solution in the short term and, in fact, may have the long-term consequences and compound the very problems that it attempts to address.

This amendment would make the VA a less attractive option than other agencies when it comes to recruiting and retaining quality executive leaders, and it will not have the very talent it needs to solve the problems it faces today, like the claims backlog and the health care deficiencies.

Furthermore, SES pay and bonuses are governed by title 5 of the United States Code and administered by the Office of Personnel Management. Any change to title 5 to address the VA would then also apply to all other Federal agencies.

Attempting an across-the-board, one-size-fits-all fix will penalize those who are dedicated VA executives who are working hard and doing a good job to find solutions to the VA problems.

I urge all Members to vote ''no'' on this amendment. We are throwing out the baby with the bathwater. This is not a good amendment, and I urge this House to defeat it.

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

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this amendment.

I would first like to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS) for offering this amendment. Our offices have worked closely on this issue.

To reiterate, this amendment to the Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act is a simple one. Senior leadership at the VA has repeatedly failed the very veterans they are meant to support.

Initial responses for benefit claims hover close to a year in many cases, with appeals responses taking significantly longer. In too many instances, these matters even require Congressional intervention.

My staff, though happy to do so, has far too many cases open on behalf of the veterans trying to receive their earned benefits with the Veterans Administration.

With so many of our veterans being let down by their government, those in charge of the administration of benefits should not be rewarded. This should be common sense.

I would also like to take a quick moment to thank Congressman JEFF MILLER, chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, for introducing similar legislation that would allow the Secretary of the VA to fire senior executives or cut their pay for lack of performance.

There are many Members on both sides of the aisle interested in shaking things up at the VA. I suggest we start here today by adopting these relevant amendments that will hold these government employees accountable.

Again, I urge passage of this amendment.

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

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Michigan is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the amendment introduced my friend, Mr. ROTHFUS, to deny bonuses to members of the VA Senior Executive Service.

Bonuses are paid for a job well done, but at the VA, the job is very clearly not getting done. The tragic story out of Phoenix is only the latest example.

□ 1645

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and a doctor who served at the Iron Mountain VA for 20 years, I have watched in disgust as the stories keep rolling in. Pittsburgh; Atlanta; Memphis; Colombia, South Carolina; and Augusta, Georgia, have all seen preventable veteran deaths linked to severe mismanagement. Make no mistake, these are not isolated incidents. This is a national crisis, and it must be treated with the significance it deserves.

We can keep dragging VA leaders in front of the committee, but I, for one, am sick and tired of hearing their excuses. We are well past the time when explanations and apologies would be enough. It is time to hold the people that have repeatedly and egregiously failed our veterans accountable for their actions.

This amendment is a good, commonsense first step, and I am proud to support it. However, it alone is not enough. The problem goes deeper than the Senior Executive Service, and our veterans are demanding real accountability. That is why I have introduced the Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act, to provide a permanent solution to getting the VA to provide the care our veterans need. I am pleased this bill was passed unanimously by the VA Committee, and I look forward to its consideration on the floor. We can't wait any longer to make the essential changes to the VA that our veterans deserve.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, the amendment before us reflects the concerns that Congress has had over senior executives at the Department of Veterans Affairs receiving performance bonuses when VA hospital standards were not up to par and when we continue to see a backlog of disability claims.

I share those concerns that VA truly does need to tackle. But recent actions taken by this Congress through the good work of the MilCon Appropriations Subcommittee and the Veterans Administration have, in fact, improved the operational efficiency of those hospitals and reduced the backlog.

The VA has also instituted much greater transparency in the process of awarding bonuses for its Senior Executive Service. In fact, VA has centralized senior executive award decisions. They have added an additional level of review in consideration of those awards. And the VA has significantly reduced the value of those awards compared to prior years. Most importantly, the Secretary has already demonstrated his willingness to use the bonus system as a way to reward and penalize staff based on their performance. As it stands, the Secretary has all the authority he needs to use bonuses to influence performance.

I think this amendment is something of a political ploy, Mr. Chairman. It is designed to misdirect our frustrations to the good men and women who have chosen to serve their government in the civilian workforce. I take serious issue with this very popular practice of continuing to punish a workforce that is predominantly composed of hard-working Federal servants that have already suffered a disproportionate amount.

If we want to retain the individuals that make up what is, in fact, the best large Federal civil service in the world, we need to change this culture very quickly. After 3 years of pay freezes, pension cuts, pay cuts, and furloughs, our Senior Executive Service, which is largely composed of the best of the best in the Federal workforce, has, at the very least, earned these bonuses.

The Congressional Budget Office has confirmed that Federal employees in highly skilled professions could be earning much more in the private sector. Why do they choose public service? Not for monetary gain but for love of country and the opportunity to make people's lives better, particularly our veterans. But they have families to feed and mortgages to pay and children to send to college. Where does it end?

No matter how many times this House majority says the government can't solve problems, can't create jobs, can't help the American people, it will never be the case. The fact is this government does help the American people. We should be proud of our government, not punish our civil servants. And the fact is that you can find far more veterans who are appreciative of the good work that the people in the Veterans Administration do than those who disparage it.

So I would urge rejection of this amendment and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LAMALFA. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, I rise today as a cosponsor of the amendment offered by my friend from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS). I appreciate his effort on that.

It is hard to believe what I am here hearing in here today. When you look at the backlog, when you look at how veterans are being treated in this country, in northern California, it is amazing that we are on complete different wavelengths here.

The lack of accountability and transparency within the VA is nothing short of shameful. Yet again and again I have heard from many veterans in the north State concerned about the timeliness and the frustrating claims process at VA facilities in California, namely, the Oakland office, which is one of the slowest regional offices in the Nation. Despite past promises from the VA to improve the backlog, service to our veterans has continued to deteriorate. This negligence and mismanagement is completely unacceptable.

When veterans are being denied access to the care and services they rightly deserve and expect, reform is necessary, certainly not bonuses to senior executives. When a program funded by taxpayers is failing to provide the level of services expected, accountability, not compensation, should be demanded.

Rewarding incompetency not only exacerbates the most pressing issues within the VA, but also serves as an insult to the men and women who have given so much for our country, as well as the very many good caseworkers on the VA staff who see no bonus but yet still try to do their jobs underneath that regime.

This amendment is about fairness and doing what is right by fulfilling the promise to our veterans. It ensures our veterans receive the benefits and services they were promised and restores accountability within the VA to make certain taxpayer money is rightfully spent, fixing the backlog and incompetency that is harming our veterans' health and insulting them, as well as the American taxpayer.

This amendment isn't about throwing the baby out with the bathwater. This is about throwing the bonuses out with the bathwater.

I applaud Congressman ROTHFUS for his leadership in standing up for our Nation's veterans. I urge my colleagues to support this important measure.

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

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Kansas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Mr. Chairman, I am glad to join my colleague from Pennsylvania in cosponsoring this important amendment. But I must admit, it is regrettable—actually, no. It is actually shameful we actually have to be here today discussing this topic.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have heard over

and over and over again stories of abuse, neglect, and mismanagement within the VA, but the one thing I never hear about is accountability. In fact, under the leadership of the current Secretary, a Senior Executive Service employee who has presided over mismanagement at the VA is more likely to receive a sizable bonus than to be disciplined or fired.

This culture of anything goes has got to stop, and the best way to stop this is to send a strong signal across the Department of VA that Congress means business. It is obvious from the headlines about the sizable bonuses received by VA administrators at facilities in Georgia, South Carolina, Pittsburgh, and Phoenix that the performance award system at the VA is a failure.

I have asked the VA in congressional hearing after hearing after hearing for a specific list of disciplinary actions that the Department has imposed on employees and executives who have presided over these delays and preventable veteran deaths. Instead of giving answers, they have only pointed to retirements, transfers, or bureaucratic slaps on the wrist, but not a single undeserved performance bonus has been returned to the taxpayers. These smokescreen attempts to create the appearance of accountability are unacceptable.

Unfortunately, the story last week from Phoenix is not an isolated event. Just 3 weeks ago, in our committee, the VA admitted to another 23 preventable deaths occurring within their facilities. The senior VA bureaucrats responsible for the management of the facilities consistently received sizable bonuses from hardworking taxpayers. These administrators have been given a sacred trust to care for and serve our Nation's veterans. And, quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, they have broken that trust; and its time for accountability.

For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, to defund these VA bonuses, and to return some accountability to the VA.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to appeal to those on both sides of the aisle to hold the executives in the Department of Veterans Affairs accountable.

I think what has been interesting in what we have heard a little bit is really a tale of not the two cities, as Dickens would have it, but a tale of two opinions. And one opinion is the preponderance of evidence we see in our district offices and our Washington offices of problems in the VA; and then on the other side, it is basically a, yes, it is bad, but let's still do business the same way. And I think that is where the American people get frustrated.

I believe by now, everyone is already aware of the lapse in ethical and moral judgment in many of these areas, from Atlanta and South Carolina, others, but also at the Phoenix veterans hospital. You know, the decision there to cook the books that denied care to needy veterans is simply unconscionable. That fact alone should anger every Member of this body, and it certainly angers the 62,000 veterans and their family members in the Ninth District of Georgia.

Sadly, though, it doesn't end there. One has to question our civil service compensation system. The executive at the Phoenix VA facility there received a $170,000 salary plus $9,000 in bonuses. For what? Saving taxpayer money? Mr. Chairman, $9,000 is unbelievable. We rewarded an executive who, in reality, was failing our fellow Americans.

As a member of the United States Air Force Reserve, we instill in our members the universal core value of ''integrity first.'' In the case of the hospitals in the VA system, some put getting accolades over integrity. This angers me, and I will not tolerate this kind of behavior in our government.

The vast majority of Americans and the vast majority of the VA employees work sacrificially and for their fellow Americans—the vast number of them. Except for a select few, those at the Veterans Administration have answered a call to provide care and compensation to those that gave the most of themselves and for our country. To them, I want to pass along a sincere thank-you. It is disheartening that your reputation could be tarnished by association of the few at the top of your organization.

This scandal is really two problems: One is the outrageous use of secret lists to manage care so a few could thicken their wallets; the other is how we awarded bonuses to senior executives. These individuals wouldn't have received bonuses if we had known the metrics on patient appointments were exaggerated. They apparently didn't think of the consequences of their actions. And I would like to think the issue was isolated to certain areas, but my fear is that this may be a systematic problem, a problem that needs to be corrected immediately.

I want to applaud Chairman MILLER's efforts to investigate the potential secret lists at all VA hospitals.

Honorably discharged veterans don't earn the label ''honorable'' by doing what is right some of the time; they earn it by doing what is right all the time. Should we allow the hospital administrators to receive bonuses for doing what is right only some of the time?

We have an opportunity here to demonstrate that the U.S. Congress is good stewards of taxpayer money, and unethical and un-American behavior in our government will not be condoned. On behalf of the veterans that I proudly represent, I support the chairman's investigation, I support Mr. ROTHFUS' amendment, and I support the underlying appropriations measure here so that these things will not happen again.

In looking at this, it was stated just a few moments ago on the floor, it was insinuated on this floor that this was a political ploy. I don't think it is a political ploy to do what is right. I don't think it is a political ploy to take care of those who took care of us. And if that is where this debate has really taken center on—and I will say for a fact, as I said just a moment ago, that the vast majority of VA employees do a great job with what they are working with, but they are being betrayed at the top, and it is not time to award these kinds of behaviors with taxpayer dollars.

This is what we are here for, not a political ploy, but to do what the Congress is supposed to do, and that is to keep our money going where it is supposed to go in order to provide the benefits that these veterans deserve.

With that, I will support the amendment, I support the underlying bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STIVERS. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Ohio is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STIVERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Rothfus amendment, of which I am a cosponsor.

I want to thank Representative ROTHFUS for his leadership on this issue. I also want to recognize the chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee for his leadership on legislation to ensure that no member of the Senior Executive Service can abuse their power and, in fact, that they will be held accountable and promoted and fired based on performance.

Unfortunately, our Veterans Affairs has failed to take appropriate action to increase transparency and hold Senior Executive Service employees accountable for their actions and their performance. Recent critical reports by the VA inspector general and the GAO have shown that some VA executives have continued to receive praise in their performance reviews and collected generous cash bonuses up to $63,000. Let me be clear, though. Most VA employees are hardworking, dedicated public servants, but there are a few at the top who need to be held accountable.

□ 1700

The Veterans Affairs Department began the month of April proudly proclaiming success in reducing the stubborn backlog of disability claims, however, they improved that number by denying incomplete claims and creating a huge appeals backlog. The backlog is causing our veterans to be denied disability compensation and access to health care, and we shouldn't allow these executives to take bonuses for false success. The VA is clearly not fulfilling its commitment to our veterans.

This amendment is simple. It ensures that senior VA officials are held accountable for their performance and

cannot be rewarded for false performance.

In addition to our backlog problem, Congress passed in 2012 in the consolidated appropriations an amendment that required the VA to share prescription information with State Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs. As many of my colleagues know, our veteran population is facing a huge epidemic of opioid addiction, and it is leading to a high number of our veterans committing suicide and overdosing.

The VA finalized the rule in April, but it has not been fully implemented to share information with these Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs. We can't wait any longer for this program. Participation in Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs will ensure that our VA hospitals, civilian hospitals, and doctors no longer overprescribe opioids to our veterans. Not having this rule fully implemented and in use by our States is just another reason to prohibit performance benefits for our senior VA officials.

I urge all Members to support this amendment and the entire Milcon-VA Appropriations bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Chair, I rise today in support of Mr. ROTHFUS' amendment to restrict funds from being used to pay for bonuses for all employees of the Senior Executive Service at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

This amendment is consistent with Section 11 of my legislation, H.R. 357, which passed the House earlier this year by a vote of 390–0. My bill would require a five year moratorium on bonuses for SES employees and I am glad to see that this amendment satisfies the intention of the first year of my legislation for FY 2015.

Mr. Chair, over the past three years the Veterans' Committee has uncovered, and continues to uncover, numerous instances of gross negligence and incompetence by senior VA officials. Regrettably, some of these instances have resulted in preventable deaths, yet senior VA officials have continued to receive performance awards.

The most recent stories from whistleblowers in Phoenix allege that over 40 veterans could have died due to delays in consult times and alleged secret wait lists. Yet the director received a bonus in 2013 of more than $9000.

If these allegations are proven to be true, it only further shows what we have seen in other locations that when a senior executive fails they are more likely to receive a bonus than any type of meaningful punishment.

It is well past time for VA leaders to realize that rewarding failure only breeds more failure, and that is why I believe this amendment and my legislation to end all bonuses for senior executives at VA is not only necessary, it is what our veterans and their families deserve.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. MURPHY OF FLORIDA

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following new section:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to maintain or improve Department of Defense real property with a zero percent utilization rate according to the Department's real property inventory database, except in the case of maintenance of an historic property as required by the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.) or in the case of maintenance to prevent a negative environmental impact as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer an amendment to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill that would eliminate wasteful spending on unused facilities, which would save tens of millions of dollars for fiscal year 2015 alone.

The Defense Department has hundreds, possibly thousands, of buildings and structures that it has rated at zero percent utilization. This is an incredible number of useless facilities the DOD is paying to maintain.

Federal agencies, as a whole, must do a better job at managing their facilities. Taxpayers cannot continue paying for unused and underused buildings while the Nation is at record debt levels. That is not good government, and that is not smart spending.

That is why I joined with Representatives DAVID JOYCE of Ohio and MIKE COFFMAN of Colorado to introduce the SAVE Act to root out about $230 billion in wasteful and duplicative government spending over the next 10 years. This amendment is an extension of one of those commonsense solutions included in the bipartisan SAVE Act preventing the Department of Defense from spending money on facilities that the Department itself has rated at zero percent utilization.

I offered the same amendment last year, which this Chamber accepted by voice vote, and I ask for your same support today.

I understand the Department of Defense may be concerned that this amendment would prevent them from carrying out BRAC work. I believe BRAC is an essential process, and I have no intention of disrupting it. After investigating the Department's concerns, my understanding is that no additional BRAC work will happen before 2017 at the earliest, long after this appropriations bill has expired. Any ongoing environmental remediation from previous BRACs is exempted from my amendment, which gives the Department the flexibility to properly address any environmental threats at unused facilities, as well as maintain historic military sites.

With that said, I would welcome the opportunity to work with the committee to address any BRAC-related issues in conference.

Mr. Chairman, we all agree that we must rein in wasteful government spending. My amendment is a commonsense solution to do just that, and I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there further discussion on the amendment? Seeing none, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MURPHY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. ROSS

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Defense to close a commissary store.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an important amendment to this year's Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill.

My amendment would protect access to commissaries for our Active Duty servicemembers, our veterans, and their families. As a representative of a community with such a strong military presence, I have had the honor to be advised by a number of active veterans and military leaders. The requests have always been consistent. We must not balance our Nation's fiscal problems on the backs of our veterans and Active Duty personnel.

Unfortunately, the Secretary of Defense released his fiscal year 2015 budget request for the Department of Defense, which included the proposed closure of commissaries. Just last night, I held a town hall meeting, and a retired chief master sergeant, Richard Redhill, voiced his concern over the closure of commissaries. Now, look, there are already attempts out there to gut their health care by way of cutting TRICARE, and there are attempts out there to gut their cost-of-living adjustments. Let's at least leave their commissaries alone. Let us respect the obligations that we owe to those who raised their right hands to give the ultimate sacrifice of their life in the defense of this country.

Our military is the most advanced and well trained the world has ever seen, not just because we are the best in technology and weapons systems, but also because of those men and women who volunteer to stand in defense of their country.

I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for their hard work on this important funding measure and hope that my colleagues will join me in adopting this important amendment.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there further discussion on the amendment? Seeing none, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. ROSS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. TAKANO

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, I rise to offer amendment No. 3.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this Act for the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program under chapter 30 of title 38, United States Code, or the Post 9/11 Educational Assistance Program under chapter 33 of such title may be used for career education programs at proprietary institutions unless the successful completion of the curriculum fully qualifies a student—

(1) to take an examination required for entry into an occupation or profession, including satisfying all State-mandated programmatic and specialized accreditation requirements; and

(2) to be certified or licensed or to meet other academically-related pre-conditions of employment in the State in which the institution is located.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve a point of order against the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. A point of order is reserved.

The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, career education programs—programs of less than 2 years that are designed to prepare students for direct entry into a specific profession—too often fail our student veterans. Many of these programs at for-profit schools leave our student veterans with unsustainable debt and worthless credentials.

My amendment would ensure that veterans' education benefits are only used for career education programs that qualify students to take an examination required for entry into an occupation or profession or provide them with certificates or licenses that meet State and industry requirements.

I have heard time and time again that a key for successful transition from Active Duty to veteran status is gainful employment. And that is why we must make sure that the education our veterans receive is truly helping them enter the workforce. Again, I urge all my colleagues to support this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I make a point of order against the amendment because it proposes to change existing law and constitutes legislation in an appropriations bill and therefore violates clause 2 of rule XXI. The rule states in pertinent part, Mr. Chairman, that an amendment to a general appropriation bill shall not be in order if changing existing law, and the amendment in this case requires a new determination.

I would ask for a ruling from the Chair.

The Acting CHAIR. Does any Member wish to address the point of order? Seeing none, the Chair is prepared to rule.

The Chair finds that this amendment includes language requiring a new determination as to whether curricula at proprietary institutions satisfy various requirements.

The amendment, therefore, constitutes legislation in violation of clause 2 of rule XXI.

The point of order is sustained, and the amendment is not in order.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BLUMENAUER

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to implement Veterans Health Administration directive 2011-004 with respect to the prohibition on ''VA providers from completing forms seeking recommendations or opinions regarding a Veteran's participation in a State marijuana program.''.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Oregon is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I deeply appreciate the hard work of the committee to make sure that our veterans are properly cared for. They deserve our best.

Too many are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with obvious wounds—missing limbs. But over 2.3 million are returning suffering from wounds that are not visible. They are suffering from depression and PTSD. That is why we lose 22 veterans per day who take their lives, long since outnumbering the battlefield deaths. They deserve our best.

Over 100 million people reside in the 21 States, including your home State of California, which was the first to legalize medical marijuana. Twenty-one States and the District of Columbia passed laws that provide for legal access to medical marijuana. As a result, as I say, over 1 million people now have access to it, including many of our veterans who use medical marijuana at the recommendation of their physician to treat conditions ranging from seizures, glaucoma, anxiety, chronic pain, and the symptoms associated with chemotherapy. There are also nine States, including my home State of Oregon, that now allow physicians to recommend medical marijuana for the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder.

I have heard those stories myself. I will enter into the RECORD one story that was in the NBC News on April 1 about marine veteran Logan Edwards, who describes how access to medical marijuana may have saved his life.

'OUT OF OPTIONS': VETERANS WITH PTSD HIT POT UNDERGROUND

(By Bill Briggs)

[From NBC News, Apr. 1, 2014]

Marine veteran Logan Edwards worried he could become one of the 22 former members of the armed services who, on average, commit suicide every day.

Then, he says, he tried marijuana.

Edwards, who served eight months in Iraq, is one of an unknown number of veterans who have turned to marijuana to manage Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which may afflict as much as 20 percent of veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to experts. The Department of Veterans Affairs doesn't let its doctors prescribe weed, so the former service members buy it illegally, fib to their doctors, accept it as a gift, or grow it themselves.

In Edwards' case, he says the drug may have saved his life.

''The first time I used it, I wanted to cry. Because it took away my anxiety. Because it did everything for me that the Oxycontin, benzodiazepines and anti-depressants the VA prescribed me for three years did not do,'' said Edwards, 26, a resident of Davenport, Iowa. His symptoms—an unrelenting ''hypervigilance,'' insomnia and nightmares—emerged ''the moment we walked off the plane'' in 2008.

''I can function completely fine all day just by using cannabis. I'm back in school. My attendance is good. My grades are good. My relationships have healed,'' added the former Marine. ''It allowed me to get my life back.''

In a March 12 letter, federal health officials approved a long-delayed study to explore if pot relieves PTSD. But doctors employed by the VA are banned from prescribing medical marijuana—and from completing forms that allow veterans to enroll in medical-marijuana programs. While medical weed is legal in 20 states, only eight states recognize PTSD as a qualifying condition for which physicians can write cannabis prescriptions.

''. . .Due to the way the federal government and the state want to handle this medical marijuana issue, I still am forced to spend time away from family, treating these wounds of war.''

Across that tangled post-war legal landscape, thousands of combat veterans are tapping underground sources to buy bootleg marijuana to self-treat PTSD. And in 12 states where the drug is legal but prohibited for PTSD, many are lying to doctors that they need medical weed for allowable conditions like chronic pain, advocates assert. Meantime, vast numbers of other veterans can't find it, can't afford it, abuse alcohol to self-medicate, or rely on conventional VA drugs.

''My brothers are killing themselves because they're out of options,'' Edwards said. ''These VA pharmaceuticals only exacerbate the problem. The listed side effects on (some) of the bottles say: 'Will increase suicidal ideation.' So the suicide rate is really what this comes down to.''

U.S. Army veteran Tom Studley, 28, served as a machine gunner in Iraq for 15-months. He returned to civilian life with chronic back pain and was diagnosed with PTSD. Studley was prescribed numerous pharmaceuticals, but he said that by inhaling marijuana with a vaporizer, he's been able to stop using those drugs. Here, Studley stands in the shed where he grows some of the 15 plants he's legally allowed as a medical marijuana patient in Washington state in Nov. 2011.

With marijuana federally classified as a Schedule I controlled substance (like heroin and LSD), VA physicians ''will not provide

for use,'' said Gina Jackson, a VA public affairs officer. At the same time, veterans who participate in legal, medical-marijuana programs ''will not be denied access to care for VA clinical programs but should be assessed for misuse, adverse effects, and withdrawal.''

The possibility of federal drug monitoring—plus fears of losing VA benefits and the threat of legal trouble—has driven scores of veterans to secretly use marijuana for decades to address their PTSD symptoms, several veterans said.

''Us veterans have already conducted tests on pot and PTSD—and it works!'' said Vietnam veteran Bob Walker, 69. ''It's nice to see the feds playing catch up.''

PTSD expert Dr. Harry Croft, a San Antonio-based psychiatrist who has treated veterans for combat-related anxiety and substance abuse, applauds the federally approved investigation.

''We owe it to our veterans with this condition,'' Croft said. ''Unfortunately, present treatment options are not helpful to many veterans and, therefore, other newer options should be scientifically explored, including medical marijuana.''

At Walker's home in Northern California, he ingests pot via a vaporizer each night before bed. A Marine veteran grows that marijuana and supplies it free to Walker and a local network of other Vietnam vets. Diagnosed with PTSD, Walker tried VA-prescribed Xanax and anti-depressants but found he could not function on the pharmaceuticals. About 15 years ago, he said, a VA counselor quietly suggested Walker use cannabis to relieve his insomnia, anxiety, stuttering and cold sweats.

''It solved a big problem for me. You feel, well, lighter,'' said Walker, a former Army aircraft mechanic who served in Vietnam in 1965 and 1966, watching his best friend die in a chopper crash. ''Probably 60 to 70 percent of the vets I know use marijuana for stress reduction and sleep. It's their baseline medication.''

''I'm back in school. My attendance is good. My grades are good. My relationships have healed. It allowed me to get my life back.''

Near Denver, retired Marine and Iraq veteran Sean Azzariti, 32, sees roughly the same rate of pot use among ex-service members with PTSD. He, too, was diagnosed with the disorder. But in Colorado, PTSD is not a qualifying condition under which private doctors can prescribe cannabis to veterans. So, for four years, Azzariti could not tell his physician the real reason he needed cannabis and instead said the prescription would help treat chronic nausea.

Simply because of that forced ruse, pro-marijuana advocates ensured Azzarti was the first customer in Colorado to buy legal weed on Jan. 1 when the state began allowing anyone 21 and older to purchase pot. He paid $70 for a strain called Bubba Kush and pot-infused candy truffles.

''If veterans had another avenue (to treat PTSD), most would take that and it would save lives. I wouldn't be talking to you if I didn't have cannabis,'' said Azzariti, who smokes daily to manage his symptoms. ''Veterans have been ignored for 30 years, denied what they truly need to heal. Vietnam veterans could have told us this stuff works.

''That's why I'm open about using it. Sure, there's a chance I'll lose my $120-a-month (VA) disability benefits. But that's a small sacrifice to save one life and potentially change the world,'' Azzariti said. ''With all of these people coming home from war, (the PTSD and veteran-suicide crises) are only going to get worse. How are we going to treat that? We can't just keep throwing pills at people.''

Near Seattle, Iraq veteran Tom Studley, 28, stopped swallowing pharmaceuticals for his PTSD symptoms four years ago and instead, he said, gained inner peace by smoking, vaporizing and eating marijuana.

''The anxiety begins to go away pretty quick and stays away for a while,'' said Studley, who served as an Army machine gunner.

After returning, he was prescribed muscle relaxants, Percocet and methadone for chronic back pain plus Trazodone, Celexa and hydroxyzine pamoate for sleep and anxiety. On his property, Studley now grows, harvests and uses cannabis from his 15 marijuana plants—a legal crop in Washington State.

''I feel,'' he said, ''less out of control.''

In Iowa, Marine veteran Edwards is taking control—but with a painful plan.

In May, he will move to Colorado, away from his girlfriend and 3-year-old daughter. He's relocating and transferring colleges, he said, for one reason: to legally access medical marijuana to continue managing his PTSD. He's tired of breaking the law.

''I thought my deployment days, being away from my family, ended when I got out of the Marine Corps. But due to the way the federal government and the state want to handle this medical marijuana issue, I still am forced to spend time away from family, treating these wounds of war,'' Edwards said.

''I never thought I would have to leave the state and community I grew up in to get access to medicine that's working and is better for me than the FDA-approved stuff. I never thought I would end up being a medical refugee.''

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, any of my colleagues, whether they are in the State that has legalized medical marijuana or not, can find examples of veterans who are benefiting from this treatment, yet the Veterans Administration specifically prohibits its medical providers from completing forms brought by their patients seeking recommendations or opinions regarding a veteran's participation in a legal State marijuana program.

The amendment which I am offering today with Representatives FARR, ROHRABACHER, and POLIS is simple. It ensures that no funds be made available to the VA to implement this prohibition. The amendment would not authorize the possession or use of marijuana at VA facilities. It would simply free up VA providers to recommend medical marijuana or to provide advice upon it in accordance with State laws if they choose.

Over 20 percent of those 2.3 million American veterans suffer from PTSD or depression. While there is no single approach to aiding our veterans with PTSD, we should not use an outmoded policy to serve as a roadblock to the path to recovery. We found that there are nearly 1 million veterans who receive opiates to treat chronic painful conditions. More than half of them continue to use it chronically after the treatment regimen.

Another study found that the death rate from opiate overdoses among VA patients is twice the national average. In States where patients can legally access medical marijuana for painful conditions as an alternative, we shouldn't tie the hands of that primary provider or prevent our veterans from talking to their primary care physicians. They should not be forced outside the VA system to seek a simple recommendation or to get information about these conditions or eligible conditions granted to them by State law. Our VA physicians should not be denied the ability to offer recommendations and advice that they think meets the needs of their patients.

□ 1715

This shouldn't be controversial. According to a poll published in the New England Journal of Medicine, over 70 percent of physicians said they would, when appropriate, recommend the use of medical marijuana to their patients.

We all know of people with violent nausea as a result of chemotherapy. Why would you deny that to our veterans or at least being able to discuss it? Physicians who support legalizing medical marijuana nationally have exceeded 70 percent in major national polls.

This amendment simply allows veterans to consult with their primary provider, the same right enjoyed by over 100 million Americans today. I urge you to treat our veterans fairly and approve this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to this amendment because, even though I am a strong believer in the 10th Amendment and public health and public safety is reserved to the States under the 10th Amendment, here we are talking about Federal facilities.

Marijuana is prohibited under Federal law. Any Federal facility funded with Federal dollars—I think it is entirely appropriate that it continue to be prohibited on a Federal facility. This is an issue that should be left to the States.

Nothing is prohibiting a veteran from seeking medical attention in a State where this is legal or where medical marijuana is permitted. They can certainly go to a private physician. Frankly, in the States where it is legal, in some of these States, I think they are even working on vending machines for them.

I understand the gentleman's position, but again, these are Federal facilities funded with Federal dollars. It is prohibited under Federal law, and it is an issue best left to the States.

I think we would all do better as a Congress to honor the 10th Amendment and leave those issues involving public health and public safety to the States. We ought to focus on the issues specifically delegated to the Federal Government by the Constitution and leave the vast majority of issues in the hands of voters, their local elected officials, and State officials. This is certainly one of them.

When it comes to a federally-funded facility, I think it is appropriate that

the VA has a policy against their doctors prescribing or recommending the use of a substance that is prohibited under Federal law. If they need it, they can go to States where it is permitted. I urge Members to oppose the amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Chairman, I couldn't disagree more with my respected chairman. This is really a medical issue that ought to be in the hands of medical doctors. It does not allow them to prescribe marijuana. They can prescribe Oxycontin.

What this amendment does, it says if your State has legalized for medical purposes, as a doctor in a VA facility, you can have a discussion with a vet seeking medical advice on whether you ought to have access to—he can't write out the prescription, he doesn't have authority to do that. It is a conversation. It is a discussion. It is a medical conversation.

I don't care whether you are for or against marijuana. That is not the issue here. The issue is—and Mr. Chairman, you know this issue from Eric Seastrand in our California State Legislature who happened to be a Republican assemblyman dying of cancer, he got up and made the most impassioned plea I have ever heard in my life on a legislative floor, saying members—and he was a pretty conservative guy. He said: you know, when you are dying, don't deny us access to hope.

The issue was about getting access to a prescription drug that hadn't yet been licensed. So I think we are in this debate now in this country whether we like it or not. The voters of California overwhelmingly passed—and I think it is pretty much a senior citizen issue—that if we are having chronic pain and if we think medical marijuana can help alleviate that pain, don't deny us access to it.

All this amendment says is that if you are in a VA clinic and you want to have a discussion with your doctor about relieving pain or other things, you can have that conversation.

As a medical adviser, I think they want to have that authority. They can't do it in every State, they can't do it in every VA building, only in those States where the dialogue is going to be on the streets anyway; but they are not going to be professional dialogues unless you allow doctors to do this.

This is a very simple amendment. Let doctors be doctors. Let them advise patients accordingly. Pass this amendment, regardless of how you feel about marijuana.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FARR. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I listened to my good friend from Texas. I am troubled here. Why would we force veterans who are entitled to veterans' health and have a primary physician that meets their needs say, sorry, you don't get it in this case, go out on your own nickel, go out and find a new doctor?

We are not talking about prescribing it. We are not talking about using it on Federal facilities. We are talking about giving access to information and having that conversation.

I dare say there is no other medical condition, if it were polio or cancer, that you would say: nope, go someplace else. Go on your own dime. Find somebody—build a relationship with someone who doesn't know your history, who hasn't seen you regularly. You are out of here.

I think that is a disservice to our veterans. I don't think it is anything that—if you talk to veterans' groups, if you talk to the people who benefit from it, that they think that they ought to be denied the ability to consult with their trusted medical provider.

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FARR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. Very quickly, we are talking about those States where it is already permitted—either medical marijuana is in Colorado, and I think Washington State has already permitted it.

It is a 10th Amendment issue. It is something that is left up to the States, but we are talking about federally-funded facilities, and that is the concern here, in a federally-funded facility, where it is illegal under Federal law, that is the problem.

Mr. FARR. No, it isn't.

Mr. CULBERSON. This is a federally-funded facility.

Mr. FARR. Yes. And so you are going to have the doctor say: I am sorry, you are in a Federal facility. I can't talk to you about a prescription of medical marijuana, even though you have asked the question. I can answer your question about abortions. I can answer your question about Oxycontin. I can answer your question about alcohol. I can talk about any other kind of evil that may be in your mind or benefit that may be in your mind, but I am prohibited by Federal law because I am a doctor in this State working for the Veterans Administration, from having a conversation with you about medical marijuana.

That just doesn't make sense. It is not good medical practice.

Mr. CULBERSON. Because it is prohibited by Federal law.

Mr. FARR. Because it is prohibited by Federal law and I happen to be in a State where Federal law ignores this because law enforcement, medical folks, it is part of our system. We have worked out the regulations.

You don't see the Feds coming in and busting clinics in California or people using medical marijuana. You would be busting a lot of senior citizens. Look, we have a hypocrisy in the law. That is what this amendment is trying to clear up. I ask for an ''aye'' vote.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. To my friends from Texas and Oregon, I would say to the gentleman from Texas: you are absolutely right, it is against Federal law, and that is something that we as a legislature need to look at very closely.

We are dealing with issues right now in Colorado where we have legalized the use of marijuana. In respect to certain banking laws, there may be a question of whether banks can provide financial services to marijuana businesses, and as a consequence, cash is building up.

So you may be absolutely right, I say to my friend from Texas; but the gentleman from Oregon does, as does the gentleman from California, state a valid case from a medical point of view. I would just say that I had a brother-in-law who had melanoma, and the only thing that gave him any relief was marijuana.

Now, subsequently, he has passed away, but from a medical standpoint, there ought to be an opportunity for a doctor to consult with a patient to prescribe something that gives that kind of relief.

So you are correct, Mr. Chairman, but I think we need to really take a good look at this. In Colorado, we see a lot of people coming to Colorado to help treat epilepsy because marijuana may have some positive effects on epilepsy. We need to take a look at that in a whole variety of ways.

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. That is absolutely a valid issue for the States to take up. We should all honor the 10th Amendment. The Constitution delegates limited powers to the Congress. If it crosses State lines, interstate commerce, that is a valid Federal concern. If it is using Federal dollars, that is a valid Federal concern.

But that debate, you are exactly right, should be held at the State level. When it comes to police powers, public health, public safety, that is reserved to the States under the 10th Amendment, and I would absolutely agree; but in a Federal facility, that is different.

That is using Federal dollars to talk about a substance that is prohibited under Federal law. I have a problem with that.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Chairman, I am very happy to hear my good friend from Texas supporting the other legislation that we have that leaves it up to the States to make sure that they can declare marijuana legal or illegal. I am very happy to have you on board.

I rise in strong support today, however, of the Blumenauer-Farr-Rohrabacher-Polis amendment to the MilCon-VA Appropriations bill, which would essentially remove an unreasonable barrier that prevents VA physicians from recommending that our veterans have the benefit of State medical marijuana programs.

The idea that VA physicians, totally legitimate doctors who treat veterans and their illnesses, cannot recommend marijuana—or, by the way, any other drug to their patients—and to treat things especially when they are going to recommend a drug that might be used in treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder, this is extremely troubling.

Our veterans have benefited from using medical cannabis to treat PTSD and other ailments, so why are we denying our veterans the ability to access something through their health care provider that is available to the general public through access to their providers?

The fact that our veterans cannot receive recommendations from VA physicians means that they are forced to go outside the VA system just to get a simple recommendation on a drug.

Restricting the freedom and ability of our Nation's heroes, individuals who have sacrificed so much for our freedom, to obtain medicine that their doctor believes would alleviate their problem and would be a treatment to an ailment that may be as a result of a war that we sent them off to fight, but now to deny them the right to actually have their doctor give the recommendation that he thinks would help them is just simply not right.

There are numerous physicians who believe that medical marijuana can have a great impact on these patients, on these veterans, on these people who are perhaps suffering as a result of the battles that we put them through. To fence off our veterans from such benefits is simply not acceptable.

I sincerely hope that all of my colleagues will stand up for patients and veterans by rejecting this heavy-handed government intervention into the doctor-patient relationship.

Vote for this amendment and get out of the way of the medical judgment of VA physicians who are treating our veterans. Get out of the way. Let our VA physicians do what they believe is right for our veterans. That is what the issue is today.

We are talking about medical marijuana or other treatments, and certainly, our VA physicians would know more about that and have more concern for their patients than we here in Congress and those people who set up national rules have.

So let's get out of the way, make sure we give the power and empower the VA physicians to do their job. Our veterans deserve that from us. They don't deserve obstructionism between the United States Congress and the veterans' physicians. I call on my colleagues to join me in support of this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1730

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Nevada is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this amendment by Messrs. BLUMENAUER, ROHRABACHER, and FARR. I am strongly in favor of it.

The people of Nevada voted overwhelmingly to legalize medical marijuana. In the coming months, the first medical marijuana depositories will go online throughout the State. At the same time, we also have a brandnew VA hospital, which will be serving the veterans of my district and all across southern Nevada.

Unfortunately, due to VA's current restrictions, the more than 250,000 veterans who call Nevada home will be unable to receive a prescription for medical marijuana through their VA doctors, and so they will not have the opportunity to take advantage of this available in Nevada medical option.

This is just not fair. I believe that the VA should have the flexibility. It has been said much more eloquently than I can by the sponsors of this amendment; but the VA should have the flexibility to recommend the best medical treatments available to our Nation's veterans, especially if that treatment is approved under the State laws where the veteran lives.

As a Member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I regularly speak with both VA doctors and patients about advances in care for our Nation's heroes. Forcing those people—those brave men and women who have sacrificed so much—now to seek outside medical evaluation to access legal medical treatment from doctors who have little or no understanding of the unique challenges that our veterans face is simply bad policy—bad political policy and bad medical policy.

We have already seen the positive results that medical marijuana can have for patients suffering from PTSD and other ailments associated with traumatic experiences, such as combat. More studies are underway—including by the VA itself—that are anticipated to show these same kinds of results, and we have heard numerous stories firsthand.

I support this. I think it is common sense, it is bipartisan, we should move forward, and I urge my colleagues to join.

At this time, I yield the remainder of my time to Mr. BLUMENAUER.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentlelady's courtesy and the points that she made.

I heard my friend, the chair of the committee, talk about it being against the law. I am not aware of any place—and I would direct this to Mr. CULBERSON—I am not aware of any place in the statutes where it is illegal for our VA doctors to give advice to our veterans about a treatment that is legal in a State.

What we are talking about is a prohibition that is a directive, so if there is a statute, I would be interested in knowing about it; but even if it is, what if the advice that the VA doctor wants to give is don't use medical marijuana?

They know their patient. Even if it is legal in their State, they think it is not in the best interest of the patient. Your policy would prohibit that doctor from telling that patient: I think it is wrong for you, I don't think it works.

What is the wisdom of prohibiting? You are prejudging what the doctor would say. I think the doctor ought to be able to give whatever advice he or she wants to give.

I would yield to you, if the gentlelady would permit, where is it illegal under Federal law for a doctor to talk about medical marijuana or any other legal treatment?

Ms. TITUS. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON).

Mr. CULBERSON. I would simply point out that a Federal employee who is paid with Federal tax dollars is obligated to follow Federal law.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Right. Where is it in the Federal law that it is illegal?

Mr. CULBERSON. It is prohibited under Federal law.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Where in Federal law? I haven't been able to find that. Where is it prohibited for a doctor to give advice to a patient for a treatment that is legal in their State, pro or con? Where is that illegal?

Mr. CULBERSON. My point is simply that a Federal employee drawing his paycheck from Federal tax dollars obviously is obligated to follow Federal law.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Right. Where is that illegal under Federal law?

Mr. CULBERSON. Marijuana is prohibited under Federal law, and that is my point.

I urge Members to oppose the amendment for that reason.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I would like to make the point that the gentleman is wrong. I am happy for him to show us where it is prohibited for a doctor to talk about a legal State treatment. There is no Federal prohibition that we have been able to find because, if I could find it, I would introduce legislation to repeal it.

But my point obtained, what if the advice of the doctor is don't use medical marijuana, which is legal, because it is not right for you, I am your primary physician, why would you prohibit that?

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee). The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Louisiana is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Chairman, today, in this very interesting discussion, I am talking on this subject coming from the perspective of a physician and a military veteran himself, someone who is very acquainted with addiction disorders, someone who has been a medical director for addiction centers, even involved with methadone treatment over the years.

I can tell you that we all honor our veterans. We love our veterans. We are so glad that they have sacrificed what they have and what they go through. We know about PTSD and traumatic brain syndrome and all of these things which are a big problem.

However, I would say to you, Mr. Chairman, that the last thing in the world we should be doing is giving medical marijuana to people with these disorders.

What have we learned just in recent days? This month, the American Heart Association came out and said that marijuana, through their studies, both in young adults and middle-aged adults, has been shown to be very damaging to the cardiovascular system, leading to heart disease and congestive heart failure. I have a study right here.

Also, in this month, Northwestern came out with a study where they found that there was profound changes in the brain just among young adults who were using only casual exposure to marijuana. We know, on a biochemical level, that addictive substances such as marijuana causes changes in the microscopic neurotransmitters. I wrote a book on that in 2007.

So I would say to you today that one of the last things we should do is to damage the brains and the hearts of our beloved veterans. Why should we be hurting them?

As far as the claim that there is medical use for marijuana, where is the proof of that? What disease or disorder can be treated by marijuana and nothing else just as well, if not better? There is no proof out there. Trust me, I have been looking for it.

There is a mention of treating seizures. Yes, the University of Mississippi is doing a study extracting the oil, not the THC, but the oil for the use for some seizure disorders. It is under experimentation. There is no proof that it does any good.

Is medicinal marijuana anything other than recreational marijuana? Well, we have more dispensaries in California and Colorado than we do Starbucks. Do we have that many sick people in these States? I don't think so.

So I come to you today as a physician telling you that, having treated veterans in VA hospitals, one of the last things in the world we should do is give addicting substances to people with PTSD and other brain disorders. Any good physician would tell you that. We have other anxiety-reducing medications that are nonaddicting and work very well. Antidepressants do a very good job.

But we know that if we compound a brain disorder or disease with an addicting substance that alters the brain itself, we are just going to see even higher rates of disorders, especially suicides.

I would challenge you today that we back away from this. Fine, if we want to do some more studies, but medical marijuana—medicinal marijuana—in fact, we even have something called Marinol, which is prescribed sometimes under a physician's supervision—but medicinal marijuana is not under a physician's supervision.

There is a scrip written out, and somebody goes and gets high. The smoke from marijuana has more tar in it than cigarettes. Why do we want to have another epidemic of lung cancer and heart disease, for heaven's sake, especially among our veterans?

I would say to you today that you can argue about the law. I would say to the gentleman that, yes, it would be improper to recommend to a patient to break the law by using a schedule I drug. It is against the law to use that, at least the Federal law. I wouldn't advise a patient to go break the law. I don't think that would be proper for me as a physician to do that.

I would say to you today that we have a number of medical and health reasons that we don't want to hurt and damage the vital organs of our wonderful and beloved veterans.

Again, if somebody has a claim that marijuana helps people medically, if it is so necessary and better than any other drug that we have on the market, well, then come forward with the proof.

The fact that there are doctors out there who say: yeah, I prescribe it for my patients, fine. But we have doctors who do a lot of things that I don't advise and many other doctors don't advise. It doesn't make it right. It only makes it right if we have proof out there, scientific evidence, that supports its use and benefits.

I think this is a good debate to have. I know we are going to be talking about this more, but this does not belong in this bill. Let's protect our veterans, not damage them.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Tennessee is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Chairman, what the gentleman said was a one-size-fits-all answer.

The fact is, when I first spoke on a similar amendment about the DEA and marijuana, it was about a gentleman named Oral James Mitchell, Jr., a Navy SEAL who served this country in Vietnam and died in 1996 of pancreatic cancer.

He violated the law in 1996 in the State of Maryland because he used marijuana to ease his nausea. Also, as his mother said:

> It is the only thing that allows Oral to smile and to eat. He didn't like the Marinol. He said it didn't do as much good as smoking marijuana.

When we are talking about somebody who has cancer and wants to use marijuana to improve the condition they are in and suffering from the nausea—and there is a lot of evidence that it is better than Marinol—then we don't have to worry about the situations that the doctor mentioned about possibly causing somebody heart disease over a period of years, which we know tobacco does and it is sold all around and legal.

We are talking about saving people pain, and we are talking about a VA doctor being able to distinguish between allowing somebody who might be in the last months or years of life and alleviating their pain with one of the best agents known to man to do that, rather than a situation where somebody might be young.

We don't have that many veterans who are as young as the AMA study discussed and their ability to think. That was talking about kids who were teenagers. They are not veterans.

I would submit that there are times the doctor should have discretion. We are not talking about the doctor dispensing marijuana. We are talking about a directive from the Federal Government prohibiting the doctor from saying: I think like Dr. FLEMING, and I don't think that you should use marijuana, I don't think you should go to another physician if you could afford it outside the VA system and try to get him to give you a directive to where you can go and get marijuana.

This prohibits the VA doctor from allowing Dr. FLEMING, if he worked at the VA, to tell his patient not to do it. The VA doctor should be able to speak the truth.

This is censorship by our Federal Government—a directive—which I think most of the people on the other side of the aisle have certainly been against Federal Government influence in medical policies and have done all they can to stop the Federal Government from influencing medical decisions. Here is a situation where you are saying the doctor should be censored.

There is a lot of evidence that medical cannabis helps, but particularly with nausea. I know the Chair knows people in east Tennessee, as I know in Memphis, who have contacted me and asked me to allow them to be able to get medical marijuana.

They can't do it in Tennessee yet. They would like to do it in Tennessee at the veterans' hospitals, but where it is legal in the State, the doctor should not be muzzled and censored.

This Congress should be in favor of the freedom of speech and in favor of the doctor being able to use their best efforts to help their patients and exercise their Hippocratic oath to do what they think is best, which may be to say no.

I yield to Mr. BLUMENAUER to add to this discussion because he was exactly right. This doesn't say anything about dispensing marijuana. It doesn't say you are for marijuana. It simply says you allow the VA doctor to exercise their judgment.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate it. It is hard to improve upon your eloquence because you are speaking in favor of Dr. FLEMING being able to advise a veteran, if he was back at the VA, to say don't use medical marijuana.

This directive would prohibit him from saying to his patient, no, don't do it, and reciting all the facts and figures. Why would we muzzle Dr. FLEMING from his professional responsibilities, one way or another, in terms of medical marijuana?

□ 1745

The literature is being built. I just visited with dozens of medical professionals who want to do more research, who want to deal with this in a clinical, thoughtful way. We have got stupid Federal policies that prohibit the research. I have met with parents who have children with violent epileptic seizures, and they are moving to States in which they can get medical marijuana, because they can get it. The physicians cannot get medical marijuana to study, but it is making a difference for these families.

We just ought not to confuse what we are talking about here. We are talking about VA hospital doctors being able to do something that is not prohibited under Federal law, which is talking about the pros and cons of treatment. That ought to be our objective, and that is why this amendment should be approved.

The Acting CHAIR. The time of the gentleman from Tennessee has expired.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Oregon will be postponed.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. RUNYAN

Mr. RUNYAN. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new section:

SEC. 417. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to propose, plan for, or execute a new or additional Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from New Jersey is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUNYAN. Mr. Chairman, this amendment, which is cosponsored by Representative BARBER, states that none of the funds made available by this act may be used to propose, to plan for, or to execute a new or an additional round of BRAC.

There is no doubt that we recognize the defense budget pressures that we face today in this fiscal environment, and we should direct our limited dollars to addressing the current mission, infrastructure, and readiness needs in support of our warfighters. Based on the cost of previous Base Realignment and Closure, a new round of base closures will likely entail large up-front costs and will end up costing much more than originally estimated. For example, the GAO says that the last BRAC in 2005 had an actual cost of $35.1 billion. That is an approximately 67 percent increase from the September 2005 BRAC Commission's original cost estimate of $21 billion.

I know many Members of this Chamber want Congress to continue to have the close oversight of our military installations and infrastructure. This bipartisan amendment ensures that we can do that. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, which helps ensure that the funds in this bill address current needs, rather than to support a new round of BRAC.

I would like to thank my colleague, Representative BARBER, for offering this amendment with me, and I thank the chairman and the members of the subcommittee for working with me on this important issue.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BARBER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BARBER. I want to thank my colleague for cosponsoring this important bipartisan amendment. Congressman RUNYAN understands very well, I think, that we have to have a commitment in order to make sure that we do the right thing by our military.

Mr. Chairman, we are in difficult times. There is no question we are in times when the budgets are constrained, but as we draw down our forces from war in Afghanistan and shift our strategic focus to the Pacific, reducing Active Duty personnel and equipment across the services, there is absolutely no doubt that we must reevaluate where we are in terms of the Department of Defense's infrastructure. However, this does not mean that we should take on another round of Base Realignment and Closure, or BRAC.

Our military installations across the Nation have a profound impact on the families of the communities that support these installations. In my district, for example, we have two installations—the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and Fort Huachuca. Both the communities of Tucson and Sierra Vista have storied histories that go back over eight decades in support of these installations. They have become inextricably linked, with the bases and the cities growing and prospering together.

Mr. Chairman, while sequestration and the current fiscal outlook demand that we make prudent decisions about spending across the government, now is not the time for another costly round of BRAC. The 2005 round of BRAC cost our taxpayers money, and we have yet to see any savings from it. It doesn't seem prudent to start another one while we are still looking for savings. Our military communities, including those in southern Arizona, cannot afford the uncertainty of another round of BRAC.

Again, I want to thank Congressman RUNYAN for his leadership on this issue, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this important amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. RUNYAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to talk about two issues of great importance to veterans in Colorado and throughout the Rocky Mountain West.

First, I want to talk about the new stand-alone hospital, the U.S. Department of VA's replacement medical center in Aurora, Colorado. This hospital has been one of my top priorities for 7 years, which is when I arrived in Congress. This hospital has been promised to our veterans for nearly 15 to almost 20 years. The project has gone through a number of iterations over the years under two Presidents and four Secretaries of the VA. Once completed, this medical facility will serve hundreds of thousands of veterans across the Rocky Mountain West. The 182-bed facility will include a full range of medical, laboratory, research, and counseling services, a 30-bed spinal cord injury unit, a 30-bed community living center, and a PTSD rehabilitation clinic.

The hospital is well underway, but, unfortunately, the VA is involved in an ongoing contract dispute with the prime contractor, putting the cost and schedule for completing this project in jeopardy. At the heart of the dispute is the cost of the final design, which is leading to hundreds of change orders submitted to the VA by the contractor with very few approved and paid. The original design called for an approximately $1.1 billion state-of-the-art medical center, but Congress authorized and appropriated $800 million for the acquisition of approximately 40 acres of land and several buildings as well as design and construction. The original design appears not to have significantly changed and, consequently, a funding gap exists between the authorized amount for the contract and

the overall cost of the project. This contract dispute will be heard next month by the U.S. Civilian Board of Contract Appeals.

I am working constantly with the VA and with other members of the Colorado congressional delegation to find solutions to improve the construction process of this medical center and finish the project. Unfortunately, it is becoming clear to me that the VA and Congress have underestimated the cost to build this facility, and in the coming months, our delegation will be asking for additional appropriations. I am not happy about this, but we have promised this hospital to our veterans for more than a decade, and we must finish the facility.

I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for continuing a dialogue with our delegation and the VA to ensure we will have the resources necessary to finish this hospital as quickly as possible.

I also want to talk today about an important issue about our veterans who are returning home. During the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, we saw a dramatic increase in traumatic brain injuries among our veterans. One of the common neurological disorders due to TBI is the development of epilepsy. Data from prior wars indicate that as many as 50 percent of individuals experiencing penetrating brain trauma will develop epilepsy.

Because of this increase, I worked with Senator PATTY MURRAY and the Bush administration in 2008 to establish Epilepsy Centers of Excellence within the VA Health Administration. These centers have done an excellent job in dealing with people in our veterans' community who have developed seizure disorders. The VA currently has 16 centers across the country, creating a national network of facilities prepared to diagnose and treat veterans with epilepsy.

These centers need to be fully funded. I ask that the committee continue to work with the VA to make sure that the funding for those 16 centers continues unabated.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. Mr. Chairman, I am doing this, actually, to try to be efficient because we are moving on a bit.

May I request that the gentleman from Texas enter into a quick colloquy with me.

Mr. CULBERSON. Certainly.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. We attached the Rothfus amendment earlier, and I believe the amendment I was going to be offering in a couple of moments would have probably been a little duplicative, but I want to make a specific point.

We have had a series of amendments here and discussions in regards to bonuses for VA leadership. There are frustrations and concerns particularly when we look at previous GAO reports which say the matrix—some of the data, some of the collection—on wait times and other things that substantially the bonuses are based on, as this GAO report says, may actually be very inaccurate.

If the performance bonuses continue to exist, Mr. Chairman, would you be willing to work with someone like me and my office to try to find a better way? My fear is that right now, in the way it is designed, we incentivize playing games with the wait times. The world works on incentives and disincentives.

Can we work together to come up with a better methodology of how we incentivize good acts so that we are all comfortable that we are moving towards, shall we say, a proper analysis of the outcomes, and, therefore, we reward those?

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. Absolutely. Of course. I look forward to working with you and your office.

Mr. SCHWEIKERT. That is all I wanted to accomplish here.

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

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TAKANO

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this Act for the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program under chapter 30 of title 38, United States Code, or the Post 9/11 Educational Assistance Program under chapter 33 of such title and provided to an institution of higher education (as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)) may be used for recruiting or marketing activities.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I reserve a point of order on the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. A point of order is reserved.

The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, my amendment would prevent Federal student aid for veterans, including post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, from being used by colleges for marketing and recruiting purposes.

A Senate Health Committee report showed that many for-profits used more than 22 percent of their revenue on marketing and recruiting but less than 18 percent on academic instruction. At the same time, many of these schools received more than 80 percent of their revenue from Federal student aid, including post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and other veterans' education benefits.

□ 1800

That's a lot of veteran's education assistance and taxpayer money going to for-profit schools to market to and recruit students. It has been well documented that some of these schools use overly aggressive, deceptive, and fraudulent practices to get students to attend their schools. Thirty-eight State attorneys general, the CFPB, the SEC, FDIC, and DOJ are all investigating the practices of for-profit colleges. We need to address this abuse of student veterans' and taxpayer dollars. I urge you all to support my amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chair, I make a point of order against the amendment because it proposes to change existing law and, therefore, constitutes legislation in an appropriation bill in violation of clause 2 of rule XXI.

The rules states in pertinent part that an amendment to a general appropriations bill shall not be in order if it changes existing law.

This amendment, Mr. Chairman, requires a new determination, and I would ask for a ruling from the Chair.

The Acting CHAIR. Does anyone else wish to speak on the point of order? If not, the Chair is prepared to rule.

In pertinent part, the amendment restricts funds for marketing activities.

Absent a showing of a statutory or regulatory definition of marketing activities, the amendment would require a Federal official to define what activities constitute marketing activities. Such a requirement constitutes a new duty in violation of clause 2 of rule XXI.

The point of order is sustained, and the amendment is not in order.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GOSAR

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chairman, I have my first amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to create or maintain any patient record-keeping system other than those currently approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office in Washington, D.C.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chair, I rise to stand with veterans throughout the country and offer a simple amendment that seeks to prohibit funds in this bill from being used to create or maintain any unofficial recordkeeping system at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As many of you know, numerous news reports have surfaced that assert that the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Health Care System has been using secondary, unofficial records of veterans' claims and appointment requests. These allegations claim that the reasoning behind these actions was to misrepresent the actual wait times the veterans faced as they sought health care.

A whistleblower has come forward and alleged the facility was taking the

vets' application information, transcribing that information to an unofficial shared document, and only putting veterans' information and requests into the real system when they knew that the veterans were likely to receive an appointment within a 2-week timeframe. If true, on paper, the VA central office here in Washington would be under the impression that the wait time goals for appointments were being met. According to reports, veterans were waiting for months and months on end.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee is conducting an investigation into the matter and so far has said as many as 40 veterans suffered and died while waiting for appointments through the Phoenix VA system. Their investigation is ongoing, and they fear there could be many more deaths as a result of this negligence.

I would like to thank the full committee chairman, Chairman MILLER, and Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee Chairman COFFMAN for their efforts on this front.

The inspector general's office at the VA is also conducting investigations into these allegations. It is my hope that we get to the full truth soon and that those responsible are held accountable. Depending on the findings, criminal charges may even be in order. In the meantime, my goal is to ensure that such recordkeeping practices are not allowed to take place.

I have said this before, it is sad that we have to legislate in this way. When government bureaucrats don't use good judgment and common sense, regulations and laws must be changed to prevent bad behavior. No matter what the investigation shows and no matter who was involved, this practice must be prevented in the future. My amendment seeks to do just that.

Only the official systems approved by the Veterans Administration's Central Office should be used. This way, we have oversight, accountability, and uniformity. It is my hope that one day we also have a little more efficiency in these processes.

Thank you for your consideration, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the passage of my commonsense amendment.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Seeing no additional speakers, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GOSAR).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GRAYSON

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new section:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enter into a contract with any offeror or any of its principals if the offeror certifies, as required by Federal Acquisition Regulation, that the offeror or any of its principals:

(A) within a three-year period preceding this offer has been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against it for: commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes relating to the submission of offers; or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, tax evasion, violating Federal criminal tax laws, or receiving stolen property; or

(B) are presently indicted for, or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with, commission of any of the offenses enumerated above in subsection (A); or

(C) within a three-year period preceding this offer, has been notified of any delinquent Federal taxes in an amount that exceeds $3,000 for which the liability remains unsatisfied.

Mr. GRAYSON (during the reading). Mr. Chair, I ask unanimous consent that it be considered as read.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Chairman, this amendment is identical to language that was inserted by voice vote into this bill last year, as well as every other appropriations bill that was considered by an open rule.

This amendment would expand the list of wrongdoing parties with whom the Federal Government is prohibited from contracting. That list should contractors who have been convicted of fraud, who have violated Federal or State antitrust laws, who have been convicted of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, violation of Federal tax laws and other items outlined in section 52.209–5 of title 48 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

These are all offenses which any contractor doing business with the Federal Government must disclose to the contracting officer in every offer. Oddly enough however, without this amendment, the contracting officer is then free to ignore these transgressions and award contracts to the offending offeror.

I commend the authors of this bill for their inclusion of sections 413 and 414, which are relevant to this issue. I submit, however, that we can improve this bill by prohibiting agencies from contracting with those entities who have engaged in the criminal and fraudulent activities that I have described.

It is my hope that this amendment will be noncontroversial, as it was last year, and again be passed unanimously by voice vote by the House.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Seeing no additional speakers, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GRAYSON).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GOSAR

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chair, I have my second amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. The amounts otherwise provided by this Act are revised by reducing the amount made available for ''Department of Veterans Affairs—Departmental Administration—General Administration'', and increasing the amount made available for ''Department of Veterans Affairs Departmental Administration—Information Technology Systems'', by $3,215,910.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Arizona is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Chair, I rise to offer an amendment that seeks to redirect funds that would otherwise be spent on Department of Veterans Affairs bureaucrats and administrative expenses and puts those monies towards timely service for our veterans.

Although this amendment is a dollar-for-dollar transfer within this bill, which will result in a neutral impact on the bill's budget authority, the amendment will actually decrease budget outlays for 2015 by $1 million according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

The general administration account for the Department of Veterans Affairs is funded at $321,591,000. Funds to this account can be spent on things that have nothing to do with administrating critical services for our veterans. Examples include things like receptions, conferences, uniforms, and excessive travel for bureaucrats.

It is no secret that the VA, like other Federal agencies like the GSA and the IRS, has in recent years abused the trust of the American people by spending exorbitant amounts of money on conferences and travel expenses. I think we all know that the VA has had its share of problems in the past few years. Meanwhile, wait times for claims processing and appeals processing are horrendous.

The most recent report put forth by the VA indicates there are more than 600,000 veterans' claims pending with the VA. Even more troubling is the fact that 319,363 claims have been pending for more than 125 days.

Many of our veterans are simply giving up. They are either giving up on trying to obtain the benefits they deserve, or worse, some of them are giving up on life altogether. It is a travesty, and this appalling trend must by reversed.

It is disheartening to me that such wasteful spending occurs while veterans are crying out for help. It is distressing that it occurs while veterans are taking their own lives. It is truly disturbing that it occurs when we have veterans dying as they wait for care.

I appreciate the committee's hard work and its acknowledgment of the importance of reducing the backlog in this bill. Having said that, I think we

can do more and should focus on prioritizing funding for efforts that will lead to timelier care for our Nation's heroes as opposed to administrative expenses. That is why I proposed redirecting a mere 1 percent of the funds in the general administration account away from the funding for conference expenses and bureaucrats and shifting those funds towards reducing the VA backlog.

It is unfair to say that all VA employees and officials have abused the trust of the American people and the veterans that they are meant to serve. There are many within this Department who work tirelessly to get through their claims and streamline processes. To those people, I say ''thank you.''

Our veterans and the American taxpayers are not pleased with the overall production level at the VA. It is time to remember and act on the mission at hand: serving our veterans who have given so much for this Nation.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support the passage of my commonsense amendment.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Seeing no additional speakers, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GOSAR).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. JACKSON LEE

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act for benefits for homeless veterans and training and outreach programs may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in contravention of subchapter III of chapter 20 of title 38, United States Code.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chair, I want to thank Mr. CULBERSON and Mr. BISHOP for doing an outstanding job as they have done and make a bipartisan statement that as the first bill of the appropriations season comes forward we stand in solidarity against veterans waiting, against veterans' claims not being processed, and against veterans dying because they have not been treated.

I don't think any Member of Congress would adhere to that kind of abuse of our veterans, and I hope that we find solutions in a bipartisan way. I also believe the administration and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, a military retiree himself, would stand in solidarity to stop this kind of treatment of our veterans.

One of the groups that we have a solidarity and commitment to are the Nation's homeless veterans. We know that there are over 100,000 homeless veterans and 1,000-plus homeless veterans in Houston, Texas.

My amendment reinforces and reaffirms our commitment in looking to ensure that funds are not cut in subchapter 3, dealing with homeless matters, enhancement of comprehensive services, in particular, hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary care, which used to be only for homeless veterans who were suffering from mental health issues, now access to all veterans. So the Jackson Lee amendment is here to ensure that reducing, eliminating homelessness among veterans is of paramount responsibility and commitment to those who risk their lives to protect our freedom.

My amendment will remind us of our obligation to provide our veterans the assistance needed to avoid homelessness, which includes adequately funding for programs, Veterans Administration's support of housing that provides case management services, adequate housing facilities, mental health support, and address other areas that contribute to veterans' homelessness, such as the homeless matters, enhancement of comprehensive services.

Mr. Chairman, our veterans deserve the best service available, and I believe that we could do much for them. I know that in this particular appropriations bill there has been a standard of excellence to put our veterans first. Many other veterans are considered homeless or at-risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions. So that means the number of 107,000 goes up.

Contrary to popular belief, ending homelessness among veterans remains a big challenge. My own city of Houston has its own share of homelessness.

Let me take note of the homeless centers in my community: Salvation Army, Joshua House for Men, Magnificent House, Modest Family Health Care, Open Door Mission, Salvation Army, Harbor Light—of which I participate in their Thanksgiving ceremonies or Thanksgiving dinner almost every year that I have served in the United States Congress—Star of Hope, Ultimate Changes, and my good friend Mr. Jones who is on Lyons Avenue who has a facility that opens its doors to anyone who will knock, a man who needs the resources that have been cut over the years.

My amendment is to reinforce that, as this bill is passed, we will ensure that the provisions given to us under title III, section 301 that emphasizes the utilization of facilities for veterans who happen to be homeless, all veterans, would not be diminished. That is at least our minimal responsibility—minimal responsibility.

But as we approach this Memorial Day where we honor those who lost their lives, let us not leave their fellow brothers and sisters along the highway of despair.

□ 1815

On a personal note, let me indicate that as a member of the local elected government, for many years I used to participate in the standdown, where you got to talk and interact with our veterans. I can tell you firsthand the experience.

Our veterans welcome our help and need our help, for they have helped this Nation.

Mr. Chair, Thank you for this opportunity to describe my amendment, which simply provides that: "None of the funds made available by this Act for the Department of Veteran Affairs—Benefits for Homeless Veterans and Training and Outreach Programs may be used in contravention of the title 38, Part II, Chapter 20, III of the U.S. Code.

This amendment will help ensure that the rate of homelessness among veterans in the United States does not increase.

I thank Subcommittee Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for their hard work in shepherding this important legislation to the floor.

I offer the Jackson Lee Amendment because I believe reducing and eliminating homelessness among veterans, those who risked their lives to protect our freedom, should also be one of the nation's highest priorities.

Homelessness among the American veteran population is on the rise in the United States and we must be proactive in giving back to those who have given so much to us.

My amendment will help remind us of our obligation to provide our veterans the assistance needed to avoid homelessness, which includes adequately funding for programs Veterans Administration Supportive Housing (VASH) that provide case-management services, adequate housing facilities, mental health support, and address other areas that contribute to veteran homelessness.

VASH is a jointly-administered permanent supportive housing program for disabled Veterans experiencing homelessness in which VA medical Centers provide referrals and case management while Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) administer the Section 8 housing vouchers.

Mr. Chair, our veterans deserve the best services available, and I believe that we could be doing much more for them.

Today, in our country, there are approximately 107,000 veterans (male and female) who are homeless on any given night. And perhaps twice as many (200,000) experience homelessness at some point during the course of a year.

Many other veterans are considered near homeless or at risk because of their poverty, lack of support from family and friends, and dismal living conditions in cheap hotels or in overcrowded or substandard housing.

Contrary to popular belief, ending homelessness among veterans remains a big challenge.

In my hometown of Houston for example, between the years 2010 and 2012, the number of homeless veterans increased from 771 to 1,162.

We must be vigilant and continue to fight for those who put on the uniform and fought for us.

Providing a home for veterans to come home to every night is the very least we can do.

Mr. Chair, you should know that programs like VASH have succeeded in changing lives. In 2012 alone, 35,905 veterans lived in the public housing provided by VASH.

I have seen the impact of such grants in my home state of Texas, and within my congressional district in Houston, and I am sure that this funding has positively impacted many communities across this country.

In Texas, there are committed groups in Houston, working to eradicate the issue of homelessness.

For example, the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center has been involved in changing veterans' lives in a mighty way by providing Veterans and their families with access to affordable housing and medical services that will help them get back on their feet.

Mr. Chair, we cannot let this issue of homelessness continue. I urge my colleagues to support the Jackson Lee Amendment and commit ourselves to the hard but necessary work of ending veteran homelessness in America.

NATIONAL COALITION
FOR HOMELESS VETERANS,
Washington, DC, August 7, 2012.

BILL TO REAUTHORIZE, IMPROVE CRITICAL HOMELESS VETERAN PROGRAMS SIGNED INTO LAW

WASHINGTON.—In mid-July 2012, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed H.R. 1627, the ''Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012.'' As reported by NCHV, (http://nchv.org/index.php/news/headline article/senate_unanimously passes_bill_to_reauthorize_ improve_critical_ homeless_Vet/). This bill would reauthorize and improve several homeless veteran programs that are critical to the success of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s Five-Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness. On July 31, the U.S. House of Representatives proceeded to pass H.R. 1627, and less than one week later, the bill was signed into law by President Barack Obama.

This bill represents a comprehensive agreement between both parties in both the House and the Senate. NCHV's most recent Congressional Leadership Award recipients (http://nchv.org/index. php/news/headline_ article/highlights_from_ the_ 2012_annual _conference/)—Rep. Jeff Miller (R–FL), Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and Sen. Patty Murray (D–WA), Chairman of the Senate of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs—were at the center of this compromise.

Throughout the 112th Congress, NCHV has regularly advised the congressional committees of jurisdiction on the provisions in H.R. 1627 that would greatly impact homeless veteran assistance. Descriptions of these individual provisions are provided below.

For more information on H.R. 1627, visit the following links:

The full text of the bill can be downloaded here (http://www.gpo.gov/ fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr1627eas/pdf/BILLS- 112hr1627eas.pdf) (PDF).

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs has set up a webpage with a title-by-title overview of the bill and supplementary information. This page can be accessed here (http:// veterans.house.gov/HR1627).

H.R. 1627, ''HONORING AMERICA'S VETERANS AND CARING FOR CAMP LEJEUNE FAMILIES ACT OF 2012''

Title II—Housing Matters

Sec. 211. Modification of authorities for enhanced-use leases of real property

Authority for VA's Enhanced-Use Lease (EUL) program expired on Dec. 31, 2011. This section provides a modified reauthorization for the program. The VA Secretary may now enter into a EUL ''only for the provision of supportive housing,'' which is defined in the bill as ''housing that engages tenants in onsite and community-based support services for veterans or their families that are at risk of homelessness or are homeless.''

Title III—Homeless Matters

Sec. 301. Enhancement of comprehensive service programs

This section would allow Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program capital grants to be used for the new construction of facilities. Additionally, these applicants would be able to use funding from other private or public sources, so long as the applicant ''demonstrates that a private nonprofit organization will provide oversight and site control for the project.''

Within one year, VA must also ''complete a study of all matters relating to'' the GPD per diem payment method, as well as develop a more effective and efficient method for adequately reimbursing GPD capital grant recipients.

Sec. 302. Modification of authority for provision of treatment and rehabilitation to certain veterans to include provision of treatment and rehabilitation to homeless veterans who are not seriously mentally ill

This section expands VA's authority to provide ''hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary care'' (Title 38, section 1710, U.S. Code). Current law only allows homeless veterans who are suffering from serious mental illness to receive this care—H.R. 1627 will allow all homeless veterans to access these services.

Sec. 303. Modification of grant program for homeless veterans with special needs

This section expands the VA's Special Needs Grant Program to organizations that are eligible for GPD funds. Current law only allows existing GPD providers to receive Special Needs grants.

Additionally, male homeless veterans with minor dependents would become eligible for services through the Special Needs Grant Program. Current law restricts these services to women veterans with minor dependents. H.R. 1627 authorizes these dependents to directly receive services through the program.

Sec. 304. Collaboration in provision of case management services to homeless veterans in supported housing program

This section states that the VA Secretary ''shall consider entering into contracts or agreements'' with eligible organizations to help provide case management through the HUD–VA Supportive Housing (HUD–VASH) Program. Training and technical assistance may be provided to help facilitate these efforts.

Within a year and a half of H.R. 1627's enactment, VA must report to Congress on this collaboration.

Sec. 305. Extensions of previously fully funded authorities affecting homeless veterans

This section reauthorizes programs that are critical to the success of the Five-Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness:

The Grant and Per Diem Program is reauthorized at $250 million for FY 2013—the same level at which it is currently authorized.

The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), administered by the Department of Labor-Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL–VETS), is reauthorized at $50 million for FY 2013—the same level at which it is currently authorized.

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program is reauthorized at $300 million for FY 2013—$200 million above the level at which it is currently authorized.

The Special Needs Grant Program is reauthorized at $5 million for FY 2013—the same level at which it is currently authorized.

For more information on policy and legislative issues that affect homeless veteran service providers, visit http://nchv.org/index.php/policy/ (http://nchv.org/ index.php/policy/).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Seeing no other speakers, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. FARENTHOLD

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to pay the salary of any officer or employee of the Federal Government with respect to whom the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House of Representatives has certified a statement of facts to a United States attorney under section 104 of the Revised Statutes (2 U.S.C. 194).

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I reserve a point of order.

The Acting CHAIR. A point of order is reserved.

The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. This amendment actually implements what I have proposed in H.R. 4447, which is that any employee of the Federal Government—in this case, we are limiting it to the subject of this appropriations bill—not be paid if they have been held in contempt of Congress.

We have seen, unfortunately, that even though we have held Eric Holder in contempt of Congress, the Justice Department has failed to pursue that, and we are delayed on the civil contempt in the court system.

What I am trying to do here is put a little teeth into contempt of Congress, using the power of the purse.

The Constitution gives this body the power to decide how the Federal Government spends their money. And if somebody is in contempt of this body, they should not be paid. If you are in contempt of your employer in the private sector, most likely you are going to be unemployed and not get your paycheck.

I intend to offer this amendment for all the appropriations bills as a way to possibly get it through the Senate, where nothing is happening.

It is critically important that we do this in the Veterans Affairs appropriations bill because as we begin to investigate the horrifying allegations of secret waiting lists and folks dying because they are not getting timely treatment in the VA, it is certain there is going to be a congressional investigation. We need all the tools we have in our tool chest to get to the bottom of this and make sure people cooperate and make sure people testify.

We have seen time and time again where various investigations, be it Lois Lerner, whatever, that we are not getting cooperation from this administration. The contempt power and putting some teeth into it is one way we can do that.

So I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this commonsense amendment that doesn't pay people who don't cooperate with Congress. We have the power of the purse. We need to use it. We very possibly may need to use it for the Department of Veterans Affairs as a result of some of the things that they appear to be up to.

I yield back the balance of my time.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I make a point of order against the amendment because it proposes to change existing law and constitutes legislation in an appropriation bill and, therefore, violates clause 2 of rule XXI.

The rule states, in pertinent part:

''An amendment to a general appropriation bill shall not be in order if changing existing law.''

The amendment imposes additional duties or requires a new determination.

Mr. Chairman, I ask for a ruling from the Chair.

The Acting CHAIR. Does any other Member wish to be heard on the point of order?

Mr. FARENTHOLD. I would like to address the point of order.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized.

Mr. FARENTHOLD. Mr. Chair, it is my belief that this puts no other duty on anyone. Someone being found in contempt of Congress is something that is widely publicized. And as all people are charged with knowing what the law is, it seems common sense that the Department of Veterans Affairs, if it had a member subject to contempt, would know that that person is in contempt.

We are not asking anybody to do anything else, other than not pay somebody who is in contempt of Congress.

The Acting CHAIR. The Chair is prepared to rule.

The Chair finds that this amendment imposes new duties on the Department of Veterans Affairs to track the status of certain certifications.

The amendment, therefore, constitutes legislation in violation of clause 2 of rule XXI.

The point of order is sustained, and the amendment is not in order.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. PETERS OF MICHIGAN

Mr. PETERS of Michigan. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for a contract that includes first-class travel by the contractor.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Michigan is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PETERS of Michigan. Mr. Chairman, as of Monday, there were 596,061 veterans waiting for their claims to be processed by the Veterans Administration. More than half of these claims have been pending for more than 125 days.

This is outrageous and simply unacceptable. We are failing our veterans who have put their lives on the line for this Nation and rely on services at the VA for their health care and other benefits upon retirement.

As a former lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve, I am extremely disappointed with the inability to eliminate the paperwork backlog at the Veterans Administration. The men and women who have served our country honorably, and their families, deserve so much better.

In my home State of Michigan at the Detroit Regional Veterans Administration Office almost 49 percent of claims have been pending for more than 125 days. While this number may seem high, it is actually lower than the combined national average, where 53 percent of claims have been pending for more than 125 days.

It is unacceptable that, as hundreds and thousands of veterans wait months to have these essential benefits processed, government contractors are able to use taxpayer dollars to purchase first-class travel. There is no way to justify spending on luxury travel for contractors while the VA is dealing with months-long backlogs. It just doesn't make sense.

Mr. Chairman, this is why I am putting forward a simple amendment barring the use of funds in this bill to be spent on first-class travel for government contractors.

I believe this amendment sends an important message that Congress, the administration, and contractors are accountable to American taxpayers. This amendment is about making efficient use of taxpayer dollars and reducing wasteful government spending. Federal contractors simply should not be using Federal tax dollars on first-class flights.

I ask my colleagues to stand with me and support this commonsense amendment. Let us send a strong message to our veterans and other constituents about our priorities as we work on behalf of them here in Washington.

Please support this amendment which will bring further accountability and fiscal sensibility to our government.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. PETERS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. NUNES

Mr. NUNES. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for the closure or abandonment of any facility located at Lajes Field, Azores, Portugal.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NUNES. Mr. Chairman, first, I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member for their support of this amendment. And I will be very quick here.

This base is a very important location for us in the middle of the Atlantic. Over the last decade, we have invested about $150 million into the infrastructure there.

Now the Air Force is talking about actually tearing down facilities there. It is starting to spend money to tear it down.

This doesn't make a lot of sense to me, nor does it to the Congress, because last Congress, both in the NDAA and in the Defense Appropriations bills, the Congress said very specifically that this was a facility that needed to be used. The military needed to figure out a use for it. They were not to draw down the forces there.

Instead, the Air Force continues to ignore the Congress, so much so that now they want to use funds to tear down facilities.

This is a complete rejection of, I think, Congress' prerogative and Congress' intent of the laws from last year. So now we have to go into the Military Construction Appropriations bill to make sure that we hold people accountable.

I would say that this is, I think, just a placeholder. Because when you start to look at the money that has been spent over the last 10 years—as I said, $150 million—if this is something the Air Force didn't want, then I think it is time for to ask for the GAO to come in and really study who it was that did the planning to spend the $150 million in first place, and possibly even an IG investigation.

I look forward to working with the chairman and the ranking member, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. Seeing no additional speakers, the question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. NUNES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MRS. WALORSKI

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to implement sole source contracting at the national level for the selection of devices and test strips for the self-monitoring of blood glucose.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from Indiana is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WALORSKI. Thank you, Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member

BISHOP, for your assistance with this amendment.

I rise to offer an amendment that will protect veterans with diabetes.

Specifically, this amendment will ensure the VA continues to offer diabetes patients a variety of glucose monitoring supplies through the competitive bid process.

Mr. Chairman, almost 25 percent of veterans in the VA health care system have diabetes, compared to about 8.3 percent of the general public. As a result, diabetes care places a significant cost burden on the VA's budget, accounting for almost 4 percent of the overall VA health care budget and costing almost $1.5 billion annually.

Presently, each of the 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks, or VISNs, competitively bid for monitoring devices and test strips. This competition is good for the patient, and it is good for the marketplace, allowing the VA to utilize significant purchasing power. Because of this competition and the competition in the non-VA market, vendors are pushed to reduce costs and to innovate.

VA physicians rely upon the patient to be a partner in disease management and treatment. Therefore, it is critical for patients and caregivers to be comfortable with the devices they use so they can best monitor the disease, resulting in better health outcomes.

As a member of the VA Committee, I learned recently the Department of Veterans Affairs is actively considering a national contract with a single provider for diabetic supplies. While this may sound like a good idea initially, both the House and the Senate, under the leadership of both Democrats and Republicans, have consistently agreed this is not prudent.

Sole sourcing could dramatically increase costs and deny patients the ability to use devices they are most comfortable with. The cost to reeducate and retrain patients and caregivers throughout the VA population would be significant.

Finally, because of the size of the VA diabetes population, a sole-source contract would likely reduce the number of vendors for future competitive contracts and also reduce innovation.

I urge my colleagues to support passage of this commonsense amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. COLLINS of Georgia). The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Indiana (Mrs. WALORSKI).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MRS. NOEM

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to prepare an environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.) with respect to a health care facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs that is—

(1) designated as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service; and

(2) located in a highly rural area.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from South Dakota is recognized for 5 minutes.

□ 1830

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Chairman, as you may know, the Department of Veterans Affairs manages thousands of historically significant parties, and according to a recently released study and report by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the VA has a track record for neglecting these national treasures.

By neglecting these properties, veterans in South Dakota and across the country have suffered by creating obstacles, so veterans can't gain access to health care. Many of them have to travel many, many hours for just a simple checkup.

My amendment is very simple and straightforward. It protects rural veterans access to health care by ensuring that no funds will go towards closing rural hospitals in high-need areas that are designated as national historic landmarks.

Reports have shown that the VA needs to pay more attention to these national landmarks it is entrusted with and focus on the veterans that these facilities serve. I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense amendment.

I want to thank the chairman, ranking member, and the committee staff for helping me offer it today, and I ask for your support.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM).

The amendment was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed in the following order:

Amendment No. 5 by Mr. MORAN of Virginia.

An amendment by Mr. BLUMENAUER of Oregon.

The Chair will reduce to 2 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the first vote in this series.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. MORAN

The Acting CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 168, noes 249, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 185]

AYES—168

Amash
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Bera (CA)
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (FL)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Esty
Farr
Fattah
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Garamendi
Gibson
Grayson
Green, Al
Hahn
Hanabusa
Hastings (FL)
Heck (WA)
Higgins
Himes
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Huffman
Israel
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Kuster
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
Levin
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maloney, Carolyn
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
Meeks
Meng
Michaud
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Nolan
O'Rourke
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rangel
Roybal-Allard
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanford
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sherman
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NOES—249

Aderholt
Amodei
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Boustany
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Byrne
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Cook
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Cuellar
Culberson
Daines
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Ellmers
Farenthold
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallego
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffith (VA)
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Hanna
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler

Holding
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jolly
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Lankford
Latham
Latta
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Maffei
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Ruppersberger
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sanchez, Loretta
Scalise
Schock
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stewart
Stivers
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vela
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—14

Bachmann
Brady (TX)
Enyart
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Gutiérrez
Harper
Hinojosa
Lewis
Nunnelee
Richmond
Schwartz
Stockman
Whitfield

□ 1901

Messrs. RUPPERSBERGER, BRIDENSTINE, COBLE, COFFMAN, RIGELL, AMODEI, and Mrs. CAPITO changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

Mr. ISRAEL changed his vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

Stated for:

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Chair, on rollcall No. 185, had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

(By unanimous consent, Mr. CRAWFORD was allowed to speak out of order.)

MOMENT OF SILENCE TO HONOR THE VICTIMS OF THE DEVASTATING STORMS

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be joined here by my colleagues from Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Alabama, and the States that have been impacted by the devastating storms that occurred earlier this week.

While we had hoped that the entire Mississippi and Arkansas delegations could join us, Representatives GREGG HARPER and ALAN NUNNELEE from Mississippi, and Representative TIM GRIFFIN from Arkansas are back home today coordinating with Federal, State, and local officials who are organizing disaster assistance efforts. Tomorrow, Representative GRIFFIN will be touring the devastation in Arkansas' Second District with Secretary Johnson from the Department of Homeland Security.

All these delegations have spent hours keeping in close contact with one another and with officials in Arkansas, in particular, regarding the tornado that ripped through Vilonia, Mayflower, El Paso, and Paron, leaving a path of destruction in central Arkansas. And the same is true for other affected States.

The destruction we have witnessed is heartbreaking, and our prayers go out to all those affected by all these devastating storms, especially those who lost loved ones.

Our delegations would like to thank the first responders, volunteers, and neighboring communities for all of their assistance, donations, prayers, and tireless efforts during this difficult time. Their hard work and dedication has saved lives.

We also urge those who can to continue to help in any way they can to assist in the recovery and rebuilding of the neighborhoods and communities that were impacted by these storms.

We also honor and remember those we lost, and Representative GRIFFIN asked that I share a story of one of his constituents, U.S. Air Force Master Sergeant Daniel Wassom, who served as a loadmaster instructor with the 189th Airlift Wing at Little Rock Air Force Base.

Master Sergeant Wassom lived in Vilonia, Arkansas, with his wife, Suzanne, and his two young daughters. According to reports, Master Sergeant Wassom sacrificed his own life to shield his 5-year-old daughter from falling debris. His example of selflessness and bravery during this disaster is one all Americans and Arkansans can admire.

I now ask for a moment of silent prayer to honor all the victims of those recent tragic events.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BLUMENAUER

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, 2-minute voting will continue.

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIR. This is a 2-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 195, noes 222, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 186]

AYES—195

Amash
Beatty
Becerra
Benishek
Bera (CA)
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brooks (AL)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Collins (NY)
Connolly
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crowley
Cummings
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Esty
Farr
Fattah
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Garamendi
Garcia
Grayson
Green, Al
Grijalva
Hahn
Hanabusa
Hanna
Hastings (FL)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Higgins
Himes
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Huffman
Hunter
Israel
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones
Kaptur
Kelly (IL)
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Kuster
Langevin
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Massie
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McClintock
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McNerney
Meeks
Meng
Michaud
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Nolan
O'Rourke
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rangel
Reed
Rigell
Rohrabacher
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Stivers
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Upton
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz
Waters
Waxman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth
Young (AK)

NOES—222

Aderholt
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Bentivolio
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Boustany
Bridenstine
Brooks (IN)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Byrne
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Conaway
Cook
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Cuellar
Culberson
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Farenthold
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallego
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson

Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Holding
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jolly
Jordan
Joyce
Keating
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Latham
Latta
Levin
Lipinski
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Marchant
Marino
Matheson
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mullin
Murphy (PA)
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Olson
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peterson
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Rahall
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Royce
Runyan
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Scalise
Schock
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stewart
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Turner
Valadao
Vela
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Wasserman Schultz
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—14

Bass
Brady (TX)
Enyart
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Gutiérrez
Harper
Hinojosa
Lewis
Nunnelee
Richmond
Schwartz
Stockman
Whitfield

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIR

The Acting CHAIR (during the vote). There is 1 minute remaining.

□ 1912

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will read the remainder of the bill.

The Clerk read as follows:

This Act may be cited as the ''Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015''.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise and report the bill back to the House with sundry amendments, and with the recommendation that the amendments be agreed to and that the bill, as amended, do pass.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOLDING) having assumed the chair, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4486) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes, directed him to report the bill back to the House with sundry amendments adopted in the Committee of the Whole, with the recommendation that the amendments be agreed to and that the bill, as amended, do pass.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under House Resolution 557, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment reported from the Committee of the Whole? If not, the Chair will put them en gros.

The amendments were agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

Under clause 10 of rule XX, the yeas and nays are ordered.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 416, nays 1, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 187]

YEAS—416

Aderholt
Amash
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Camp
Campbell
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers
Engel
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffith (VA)
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Hahn
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Higgins
Himes
Holding
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jolly
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Latham
Latta
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
Matsui
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Meng
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nugent
Nunes
O'Rourke
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Rangel
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schock
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NAYS—1

Labrador

NOT VOTING—14

Braley (IA)
Enyart
Gingrey (GA)
Griffin (AR)
Gutiérrez
Harper
Hinojosa
Larson (CT)
Lewis
Nunnelee
Richmond
Schwartz
Stockman
Whitfield

□ 1921

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HOUR OF MEETING ON TOMORROW

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow.

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

There was no objection.

APPROVE KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

(Mr. DAINES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAINES. Mr. Speaker, our friends in the Senate are once again playing games with the future of our country.

Senate Majority Leader HARRY REID has kindly offered to allow Senators to vote on a nonbinding resolution expressing support for building the Keystone XL pipeline. That is right, a nonbinding expression that requires no action and no real solutions.

Well, grand gestures and words alone don't create jobs. The American people deserve real action. Senate Democrats who claim to support approving the Keystone XL pipeline need to stand up and demand that HARRY REID allow a real vote to approve the Keystone XL pipeline, a vote that actually puts words into action and rhetoric into results.

The American people have waited long enough. Montanans are tired of the political games, the endless delays, and politicians who refuse to put job creation ahead of partisanship. The House has acted. It is time for the Senate to step up and do the same.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow marks the 63rd annual National Day of Prayer. On this day, we praise God for the many blessings bestowed upon us. During times of great adversity and in times of great prosperity, Americans of all walks of life seek God's guidance.

Today, we face many great challenges, including brave men and women serving in harm's way and an economy that must grow faster and lift more Americans, especially those in need, to greater security. We pray that the families of this Nation may find renewed strength and belief in God's word and grace.

We also seek the Lord as we pray for those who serve in our military. We ask for God to protect them and watch over them.

Mr. Speaker, let us seek God's guidance and pray he will grant us the wisdom to overcome the many trials and tests before our Nation and its people.

On the National Day of Prayer, may God bless this great Nation and all its citizens.

TWELVE DOLLARS

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, $12. In Nigeria, $12 is the cost of a bride slave. Recently, around 200 girls went to school and never came home. They were kidnapped and, for $12 apiece, sold to the Islamic militant terrorist group Boko Haram. They were forced into marriage and raped—modern sex slavery.

This inhuman human trafficking crime is a world problem that needs action. Today, the United States took a huge step forward in the battle against this scourge. The Judiciary Committee passed three bills fighting this growing problem here in America.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act that I sponsored, along with CAROLYN MALONEY of New York, was passed and supports and protects victims of this horrible crime. It punishes the sex trafficker and now punishes the buyer, the child rapist. It helps rescue child victims and treats them as victims, rather than child prostitutes.

No life deserves to be stolen and sold for $12. Children should not be for sale anywhere, at any time, for any reason.

And that's just the way it is.

AMERICA'S CREDIBILITY AROUND THE WORLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAINES). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot going on in the world right now, and America seems to continue to lose credibility around the world when we travel abroad, and we have leaders from other countries, especially moderate Muslim allies and friends, who wonder why we are not helping in the war against terrorism, the war against radical Islam.

□ 1930

Moderate Muslims realize what it is. It is radical Islam. It is exactly what the wonderful people of Egypt rose up and rebelled against by the millions. In fact, there were more millions of Egyptians that signed a petition in support of removing Morsi than even he ever claimed voted for him.

The Muslim Brotherhood responded, and they have burned churches, and they have persecuted Christians and Jews. The Coptic Christian Pope has told us of his concern about his support for radical Islam because the United States and even a couple of Republican Senators down the hall had supported, seemed to support, went over and said: let's release Morsi. They seemed to want Muslim Brotherhood back in charge.

So it was shocking for this administration to say we are not going to supply the military equipment to those who are against radical Islam that we had agreed to provide to those who represent radical Islam—the Muslim Brotherhood.

Yes, their party—their political party in Egypt is called the Freedom and Justice Party because, under their definition, freedom means the freedom to worship only Allah and justice means only justice that comes from shari'a law, so they have a little different definition of freedom and justice.

In their less than 100-year history as an entity, the Muslim Brotherhood has killed so many innocent children, women, and men who had no grievance or gripe with Islam, but it should also be noted that one of the reasons that moderate Muslims are so supportive of our effort to stop radical Islam is because, whenever a moderate Muslim stands up to radical Islam, they immediately go to the front of the line to be killed or persecuted by radical Islamists, so we share that.

That is why the enemy of our enemy can be somebody with whom we just may be able to cooperate.

That is what happened in Afghanistan, when President Bush committed to go after the Taliban in October, November, December of 2001. We put in less than 500 Americans—special operations, Special Forces, intelligence—we gave them air support, we gave them some weapons, and we had to negotiate.

The Bush administration did a phenomenal job of negotiating with Northern Alliance tribal leaders because they knew, to be successful about the Taliban, they were going to have to work together, so we were able to pull that off. There may have been some cash that actually was utilized to grease the skids to make it work, and it worked.

Within 4 months or so, the Taliban was defeated. The legendary General Dostum that this administration wants to classify as a war criminal defeated the Taliban for us as the leader of the Northern Alliance tribes.

In a meeting with him, along with DANA ROHRABACHER, STEVE KING, and a few others were meeting with some of the Northern Alliance leaders, since we knew about that last final battle where the Northern Alliance went after the last stronghold of the Taliban elevated high up a hill or mountain, General Dostum, through an interpreter, explained he knew that, if they sent people on foot, they would never get there.

There would be too many bullets and rocket-propelled grenades. They would

never make it to the Taliban stronghold. They knew, if they could get there and rout them there, that that would be the end of the organized Taliban, at least for quite some time.

So General Dostum realized the only way to really have a shot at getting there was for around 1,000 horsemen to go charging up that hill, up toward the stronghold with bullets, rocket-propelled grenades, all kinds of things coming at him, but he knew that if they would move quickly enough, they might get past those and be able to destroy the last stronghold of the Taliban.

It worked. They did lose many of the Northern Alliance tribal soldiers, but they made it and totally routed the Taliban. What an incredible victory.

General Dostum offered to take me next time I came to Afghanistan. He asked if I rode horses. I said: sure, I grew up riding horses. He said: oh, then you need to come up with me, I will take you up that famous ride that is so legendary all over Asia.

After that, the interpreter advised me something I wasn't aware, that they don't have leather saddles in Afghanistan. I inquired: What kind of saddles do you have? And he said: they are made of wood.

That changed greatly my desire to go riding uphill on a wooden saddle, but it still is amazing what they did. They did it with our encouragement, our support, our logistical support, our aerial support.

There are other occasions when, with someone embedded with the Northern Alliance, the Northern Alliance leaders could say: Do you see over there on that ridge that little hump? That is a bunker that contains many, many Taliban.

They get the coordinates, call it in, the bomb would be released. It would go to the target and take it out, and then the Northern Alliance soldiers would finish off those who made it through the bombing.

Some in this administration think that means they are war criminals; whereas the fact is they fought the Taliban in their own country the way they have always fought and the way the Taliban fights, and they defeated them.

Then we did an unfortunate thing. We helped them with a constitution that centralized the government. In a very regional federalist area, tribal area, we should have helped them have a more federalist country where the states, the regions, have the power.

But apparently, our leaders at that time thought it would be easier to deal with one centralized government than potentially many hardheaded leaders of small countries or small states.

But we should have let them have their small states and their tribal areas because as some of the northern leaders very intelligently had pointed out: if you would help us get an amendment to the constitution that you helped push on us, that allowed us to elect our own governors, our mayors, pick our own police chiefs, then we could control Afghanistan better and then the Taliban, when you leave, can't just knock off our President and take over the whole country. Then it would be harder for them to take over the whole country, they might get one region, and then the rest of the regions could rise up and take them out of that one. We can defeat them, but not with the structure that you gave us.

There was no reason for us to lose the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of American military members under the command of Commander Barack Obama, but he had said it was the important war. The war was won by early 2002, and then we became occupiers. That was unnecessary.

Let them run their own country. They defeated the Taliban with less than 500 Americans, and now, we have lost a number of times that original number that went in and were embedded.

That has helped create an image of the United States around the world, as this administration has continued to allow the slaughter of American soldiers in Afghanistan, for what point, we don't know. At the same time, we were allowing our soldiers to be handcuffed with rules of engagement that restricted them or threatened them with court-martial if they were to defend themselves and it turned out somebody got hurt who is not a soldier.

So the world saw the United States beg the Taliban to sit down and negotiate with us. This administration was sending out word: look, you don't even have to agree to anything. If you will just agree to sit down with us, heck, we will buy you a luxurious office complex in Qatar. We may even release some of your murdering thugs that we have confined. Heck, we will release some of them anyway, just to show our good faith. Heck, we will do whatever, if you will just sit down and talk with us.

There is no radical Islamist in the world that respects that kind of talk from an American leader, from any leader. Oh, please, we beg you, please sit down and talk with us. They don't respect that. That projects weakness to them.

There is one thing they respect, and that is power, when used appropriately. They may hate it, they may despise the way it is used, but they respect power when it is used effectively. This administration has not done that at all.

Go back to Iraq. The Bush administration basically had set up a status of forces agreement by the end of 2008. Most of the terms were agreed to. The Bush administration, many of us believe, could have gone ahead and finished, had that signed before President Obama took office.

But as I understand it, it was considered a generous outreach by George W. Bush and his administration to the incoming President. Why? Because not only is he not stupid and he is not crazy and he is witty, but he is a gracious man.

That is why he had Ted Kennedy to the White House so many times, even though Kennedy would go out and bash him almost every time he had been over. He is a gracious man, and he thought it would be a gracious act, from what I understand, to allow the Obama administration to get the credit from finalizing the status of forces agreement with Iraq.

But then the brazen attitude by the new administration not only didn't sign the status of forces agreement that the Bush administration had teed up, they didn't get any status of forces agreement.

Mitt Romney was not very eloquent in the way he pointed it out, not very effective in the way he pointed it out, but he did bring it up in one of the debates—he couldn't even get a status of forces agreement done with Iraq.

It is something that this administration should have been embarrassed about. After all, we had done for Iraq under this President, this administration, we just crept out of Iraq with nothing even in the way of a thank you agreement, a thank you note—in fact, rather left hard feelings when we left.

After we left them the ability to elect their own leaders, their own government, this administration bungled the status of forces agreement to the point there was none. We lost further respect there. We have lost respect around Afghanistan.

When talking with General Dostum and some of the Northern Alliance leaders, they talked about how the United States had lost respect around radical Islam. These are moderate Muslim friends of mine—and, yeah, they do fight ruthlessly, but that is their area—they talked about how the United States had lost respect among radical Islamists among the world.

□ 1945

They see us as a toothless tiger, a paper tiger, someone to be laughed at, not to be concerned about or respected and certainly not feared.

I have met with Baloch people from Pakistan, who are constantly terrorized by the Pakistani Army and by other military—brutalized, terrorized, kept in fear for their lives so many times. They happen to be in the area where Pakistan's best minerals are located. You would think that the Pakistani leaders would treat them better since they have such a big area of the country and they comprise such a big component of the country that has some of the most valuable land because of the minerals in the whole area. It is the same in Iran. There are Baloch people who are indigenous to south and southeast Iran, and they are mistreated terribly by the Iranians.

But a thought came to mind. In having met with Baloch people previously, in knowing the geography of the area and in having heard American commanders and Northern Alliance individuals as well, all have indicated most

of the supplying of the Taliban in Afghanistan is coming through the Baloch area of Pakistan—not because of the Baloch. They don't want the Taliban helped. They certainly don't appreciate radical Islam.

So I asked our Northern Alliance leader friends—former allies before this administration—what if we started suggesting, because of the mistreatment of the Baloch in Pakistan, that it is time to give the Baloch their own independent country?

Let them be independent—to have their own area to which they are indigenous—because, if we did that, the Baloch in charge of southern Pakistan would, indeed, stop any supplying to the Taliban coming from Pakistan or anyone else who went through the Baloch area through which so much of the supplying of the Taliban has been going. Who would benefit? The world would benefit. Our American soldiers would have benefited. We could have done that years ago.

Instead, the last time I looked, there were about twice as many people—American military individuals—who had died in Afghanistan compared to the number who died when Bush went to war in Afghanistan. So, under Bush, he was about 7 years in Afghanistan compared to the years of President Obama's. President Obama has had fewer years, yet more Americans have been killed.

Why?

Because, under this Commander in Chief, the rules of engagement have handicapped our own military. Many of them have been killed by the very people they were supposed to train and because there was just simply not enough respect for the United States under this administration—because we saw what this administration would do. If radical Islamists reared up and killed Americans, we saw what this administration did. They apologized that Korans were burned.

Now, how does apologizing to radical Islamists for burning Korans that their own people had desecrated and passed messages through—prisoners who had been provided these free Korans had sent messages, had used them, and so they had to be destroyed. When they were found burning, the radical Islamists used the occasion to kill innocent Americans, and this administration apologized to the country responsible for the killings.

In civilized countries like the United States has been—and still is in most places—the law has been and continues to be, unless they are under shari'a law, that provoking words are never a defense to a physical assault or a murder. No matter what anyone says to you, does to you—no matter what it is, no matter how vile—it does not justify a physical response no matter what is said. Under shari'a, it is different, but our Constitution is supposed to be the law of the land in this country, not shari'a law.

Our fellow Texan, Mohamed Elibiary, is a man who was given FBI's high civilian award, a man who is described by the Muslim periodical in Egypt as being one of the six top Muslim Brotherhood leaders in this administration, a man who spoke as a featured speaker at the huge tribute to the Ayatollah Khomeini, Man of Vision, a man who is given a secret security clearance without proper vetting, without proper investigation by Janet Napolitano, as the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Even after he was found and known to have downloaded inappropriate material and tried to shop them, Homeland Security said: Oh, well. We never found any evidence that he tried to shop the documents from the classified sources he downloaded. They didn't even bother to talk to the reporter who stated in print that he talked to a well-known national publication to which Mr. Elibiary had shopped the documents. They didn't investigate that. Janet Napolitano lied about that. It was not properly investigated or they would have checked to try to find out with whom he was supposed to have shopped these documents. They didn't even check.

But he sure has kept his secret security clearance. He is still proud of that FBI award. He still has a foundation called the Freedom and Justice Foundation, which is just like the Muslim Brotherhood, which is the same name as the Muslim Brotherhood political party. Yet this administration continues to count on him as one of their top advisers.

That is why Muslim leaders around the world, especially in the Middle East, have told some of us—and I talked to some other Congressmen who had been on a trip recently to the Middle East, and they encountered the same thing—why are you guys helping radical Islam now instead of helping us fight it? We are wondering which one of your allies you are going to throw away next.

It is not hard to understand why world leaders who have been our allies would wonder such a thing when you see it with our best ally in the Middle East—the one that respects the rights of women, that doesn't kill homosexual, gay, individuals in their country, the one that allows Muslims to vote, to work and to provide them protection—the one country that allows all of those things. That is our ally Israel. Yet we have the Secretary of State out there, previously some months back, talking about: Gee, it may look like they want a new intifada—another murdering spree—accusing Israel of wanting more murdering when they have done everything they can to try to protect themselves.

Nobody in the media—not in this country—talks about the rockets that have never stopped flying into Israel from radical Islamist-controlled areas. Instead, you have liberals in this country—friends of this administration—who are out there, saying: Do you know what? We need to cut off anything we do with Israel. That kind of talk is supported by our own Secretary of State when he says: Gee, they are risking being guilty of apartheid. He tried to walk it back, but he has illustrated so much anti-Semitism that it is time for him to go. It is time for this administration to take a stand even though our mainstream media here in America doesn't like to hold him accountable.

Heaven help those at one of the mainstream media sources if they want to get to the truth of something like Benghazi. Their jobs are going to be gone. First, they are going to be told to back off, and then they are probably going to lose their jobs. We can't expose the truth about the present administration because, if they were interested in exposing the truth, then it would be after the highest ranking Attorney General in this country said to me: You don't want to go there, buddy. I said: Are you talking about contempt? and he made it clear that he was.

In fact, I want to look at exactly what the highest ranking Attorney General said to me in our hearing on April 8, 2014:

> You don't want to go there, buddy. You should not—
>
> Then I said: Are you talking about contempt?
>
> You should not assume that this is not a big deal to me. I think it was inappropriate—he is talking about Congress holding him in contempt because he refused and continues to refuse to provide documents that he has, that he should have produced and that he continues to refuse to produce.
>
> He said: I think it was unjust, but never think that it was not a big deal to me. Don't ever think that.

That is our highest ranking law enforcement officer in the country who was talking like that. So it was interesting.

This is what he said on February 13 of 2013. Amazing. ABC News will call my office and say: What is your basis for that? Will they ever call the Attorney General and say: How do you reconcile what you said under penalty of perjury before Congress to what you told us in our interview? Oh, gosh. No. ABC News could never do that because they might hurt the guy who is in the White House, who they helped put there.

So, in the interview with ABC News in February of 2013—it is not hard to find. If I can find it, surely ABC News or somebody should have been able to. He said to GOHMERT to never think it wasn't a big deal to him. Obviously, he is saying now it was a big deal.

This is what he said back over a year before:

> But I have to tell you that, for me to really be affected by what happened—he is talking about contempt of Congress—I'd have to have respect for the people who voted in that way, and I didn't, so it didn't have that huge an impact on me.

That was Attorney General Eric Holder to ABC News in February 2013.

Now, I had in the back of my mind that it had not been a big deal to him. Why didn't ABC News remember this?

□ 2000

Nobody at ABC News, even the one who interviewed him would have remembered: oh, you know, he told GOHMERT, don't you ever think it wasn't a big deal? Nobody remembered this from a year before at ABC News.

Now, I wouldn't use this line, but what my old practice court professor in law school used to say—Matt Dawson, a tremendously effective trial lawyer—but he used to have a line, if you were caught saying two different things, like our Attorney General has been—two different things about the same topic, Matt Dawson used to say: Well, were you lying then, or are you lying now?

Like I say, I am not saying that. I am just reflecting back on what Matt Dawson would say if confronted with those two different quotes.

What I, as a Member of Congress say, is this is really outrageous. It is time to have people in this administration that the world will respect, that the country will respect, that will be fair and evenhanded, will not come into Congress and mislead Congress, will not hold up, stonewall, prevent the American people from knowing the facts about how innocent people came to be killed with guns that this Justice Department forced to be sold to people who should never have been allowed to have them.

They are entitled and we are entitled, as a Nation, to have a Secretary of State that is respected and does not say outrageous things and accuse allies of outrageous offenses when those allegations are so far from true.

Yes, I know Secretary Kerry says he wishes he hadn't chosen the word ''apartheid.'' How about intifada, about accusing fellow Vietnam veterans of acting like Genghis Kahn? I always thought it was Genghis Kahn until I heard young Mr. Kerry talking about Genghis Kahn.

It is time for us to regain some respect in the world, and it is time for us to stop radical Islam before there is another holocaust.

I read a fantastic book written by Joel Rosenberg that came out this spring, ''The Auschwitz Escape.'' I didn't even know anyone had escaped from Auschwitz. It is a novel.

When you read about the novel, you get interested and find out there were people that escaped from Auschwitz because they wanted to get the news out to the world about what was happening, that this wasn't just a prison work camp, that they were rounding up Jews by the hundreds of thousands and bringing them in and, at Auschwitz, putting them in showers and, instead of water coming out, poisonous gas did; and then their bodies were taken right across and burned in a giant crematorium. The people that were there always saw the smoke, always smelled the vile smell of Jews' bodies burning.

Then you find out that, once people escaped, they got information out, it still took far too long for America or the Allies to do anything to stop it. We could have bombed the railroads that were taking Jews into these prison camps, like Auschwitz, where they were being killed in masses.

Even after people escaped and got word out, we didn't, the Allies didn't, and the railroads continued running, and the cattle cars cramped with Jews being taken. Initially, they were taken to the prison camps, and a decision was made, as they walked up to an individual, you go here, which means you are going to work until you can't work, and then we will gas you, and then burn you; or you are not worth keeping, so you are going to go get killed immediately.

In the end, the attempted genocide killed 6 million or so Jews. Because they were war criminals? No. Because they had committed a crime of any kind? No. Because they were Jews; that is a crime against humanity.

The leaders of Iran have said they want to destroy the Great Satan, which is the United States, and they want to wipe the Little Satan, Israel, off the map. They want the Jewish vermin, as they sometimes call them, eradicated.

There is some like the J Street Group, say: no, no, no, we can work with these people. And I have to point out to any Jew who wants to work with Iran and the current leadership of Iran, these people can't be trusted.

When the history was written, it turned out there were some Jews that helped the Nazis by pointing out where other Jews lived, where they could be arrested, or where they were being hidden. There is a special place for them in eternity.

People need to understand, the modern-day gas chambers are being constructed. They are too near completion in Iran. Right now, they are called nuclear weapons.

For a number of years now, we have been hearing projections: Iran is this close to having nukes, this close to having nukes. Joel Rosenberg raised a good point in one of his prior novels. He does great research.

In that novel, he had Iran constructing multiple—they waited until they had enough fissile material so they could construct several nuclear weapons, and I am sure that is their thought.

Just as with the 9/11 hijackers, yeah, they were crazy, but they weren't stupid. They were very methodical as they plotted to kill what they hoped would be tens of thousands of Americans, innocent people.

With glee, they thought about all the horror. With glee, some of those that helped plan, but were not actually part of the 19, that were joyful as they saw Americans deciding between being burned to death in the World Trade Centers or jumping a 1,000 feet to their death, and they rejoiced.

These same people in Iran who were so thrilled to see Americans burning, being crushed in the World Trade Centers as they fell or even jumping to their deaths before they fell, they were so ecstatic about that, and these people are working on nuclear weapons. They cannot be trusted.

Mr. Speaker, there is something this administration can do that will regain America's respect around the world, that should stop Vladimir Putin cold in his tracks, that will stop China from evermore aggressive overtaking and reach beyond their borders, to stop thugs around the world who seek to take over countries, something that would stop them because they would fear and respect America, would be the very thing that will protect America, will protect Israel, will protect Saudi Arabia, will protect UAE, will protect Jordan, will protect Egypt, and that is for the United States of America to have its Commander in Chief issue the order: Take out anything that Iran has that may be proliferating nuclear weapons. Take it out.

If they scramble to save something, then let's go back and hit them again and again, not the people of Iran, unless these cruel leaders have buried nuclear facilities in civilian areas. If they had done that, then it would be the Iranian leaders that would be responsible for criminally harming civilians and putting them as cowards, putting them between the criminals and judgment day. We need to do that.

Israel doesn't have our F–35s. They don't have all of our stealth yet. They don't have the capability to carry our best bunker busters into Iran and eliminate their nuclear weapons. We do. Maybe it takes more than one sortie, one group of planes going in. Maybe it takes more than one, two, three.

We need to do it, take them out, whatever it takes, and that stops Iran in their development of the modern-day gas chambers, the modern-day holocaust that will occur in Israel and in America if we don't act.

I read about a survivor from one of the death camps when the American soldiers arrived. They were so thrilled, they went running up, and the Jewish inmate was then free, spit in his face and asked basically: Where have you been?

Six million people killed for nothing more than being of a particular race, and we could have stopped it far sooner. Who knows how many millions we could have saved if we had acted sooner?

But now, we know. We know, without a doubt, Iran wants to develop nuclear weapons, is trying to develop nuclear weapons, have said they want to wipe us out, have said they want to wipe out Israel.

It is time to take them seriously; and by doing so, you gain respect from the thug Taliban because they realize, as Qadhafi did: wow, if he will do that to Iran, he would do it to us.

And then we wouldn't even have to because they would fear us and respect us enough, respect our power—not us individually. They would respect the

power, and the world could see more years of peace and could see an end in sight maybe for 100 years or so of radical Islam. Moderate Muslims could live in peace. Jews could live more in peace. Christians could live more in peace.

There are Christians being persecuted around the world, probably in greater numbers than ever before, not in percentages, but in numbers. In countries like Iraq, where we gave them their freedom, they are persecuting Christians and Jews. In Afghanistan, where we gave them their freedom, they are persecuting Christians and Jews.

They were persecuting Christians and Jews in Egypt until the people rose up and demonstrations—literally went arm in arm, a beautiful, incredible scene for world peace, as Muslims, Jews, Christians, secularists took to the streets to rebel and demand the ouster of a radical Islamist who was seizing power, and had they waited another year, they probably would not have been able to do it.

□ 2015

For those who believe in the power of prayer, we need to continue to pray for Israel and we need to continue to pray for Egypt and the Egyptian leaders.

I applaud the Obama administration. I was thrilled and am so pleased that this administration has announced they are going to go ahead and furnish Apache helicopters to the new government in Egypt.

It is going to be tough for the Egyptians. They have got a tough economy. They have too many on welfare. They have got a lot of adjustments to make. But they want freedom. The masses of Egypt want freedom. They don't want radical Islam. They don't want radical Islam like that which rebelled and killed Qadhafi and took over Tunisia. They don't want that.

We need to encourage them. We need to help them. We need to help them eliminate all the weaponization that Morsi encouraged and allowed, it turns out, in the Sinai, as Egypt stands up against radical Islam.

So I really want to thank the Obama administration for following through in supplying the Apache helicopters that were supposed to be supplied.

As General el-Sisi, who has stepped down as general of the military, and who will likely be elected President, said previously, Do you not understand we use the Apaches to keep the Suez Canal open? We are using the Apaches to clear out the radical Islamists in the Sinai. Why wouldn't you want to help us do that? Why would you rather help radical Islam?

I know that in this body a majority would stand with our President and we would be proud of him if he would protect us and protect Israel, stop the nuclear proliferation in its tracks, not by promising to release murderers, not by talking Israel into releasing more murderers, and not giving Iran billions and billions of more money and not eliminating any more of the sanctions against Iran, but just take out the nuclear capability that has developed so far. Because otherwise, if we let them get nukes, they will be glad to supply them to terrorists.

You don't have to have intercontinental ballistic missiles to get a nuke to America. You can put them on a boat and float them right up the Potomac, the Hudson, right up to Chicago, up to Houston, New Orleans, and take out 70 percent of our refining capacity.

So they could put a nuclear weapon on even a sorry Scud missile that is so inexact and launch it from a boat or a barge into the interior airspace. It doesn't need to hit the ground, but there is a huge range that even a Scud missile could make, and explode a nuclear weapon, creating an electromagnetic pulse, or EMP, that would fry most of the computer chips in the country, shut down most of our electrical capacity, shut down grocery stores, shut down stores relying on computers, shut down cars that have reliance on computer chips.

They could do all that with one nuke and a lousy missile that is not very exact. They could do that.

It is time we acted before they destroy America as we have known it, as it has come to be the greatest country in the history of the world. It has more individual freedom, but we see that waning. It has the greatest economy in history, but we have seen that wane.

Now we are told in a very short time China will be the biggest economy, unless something happens. How about if the United States stops the modern-day gas chambers from being completed, stops the radical Islamist enemies of America, Israel, and of moderate Muslims?

How about if we do moderate Islam a favor and take out the radicals for them as well?

Let's get peace on track. And you don't do it with a Secretary of State that condemns our closest allies and accuses our allies of being criminals. You don't do it by releasing murderous thugs of countries that hate us and are planning to kill us at some point whenever they get the capability. You do it by self-preservation.

In Texas, we are pretty proud of our self-defense laws. When somebody has told you they are going to kill you, and they are close to having the ability to do that, it is self-defense to stop them.

It is time.

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today and the balance of the week on account of the recent tornadoes in Arkansas.

Mr. HARPER (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of him assisting with the emergency response to the tornadoes in Mississippi.

Mr. NUNNELEE (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of recent tornadoes in Mississippi.

Mr. RICHMOND (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and May 1 on account of attending to family matters.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 994. An act to expand the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 to increase accountability and transparency in Federal spending, and for other purposes.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 22 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, May 1, 2014, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

5484. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Pine Shoot Beetle; Addition of Quarantined Areas and Regulated Articles [Docket No.: APHIS-2010-0031] received April 17, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5485. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Asian Longhorned Beetle; Quarantined Areas in Ohio [Docket No.: APHIS-2013-0004] received April 17, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5486. A letter from the Associate Administrator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Regulations Issued Under the Export Apple Act; Exempting Bulk Shipments to Canada From Minimum Requirements and Inspection [Doc. No.: AMS-FV-14-0022; FV14-33-1 IR] received April 17, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

5487. A letter from the Chief Counsel, FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Suspension of Community Eligibility (Baltimore County, MD, et al.) [Docket ID: FEMA-2013-0002] [Internal Agency Docket No.: FEMA-8327] received April 17, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

5488. A letter from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting the Department's final rule — Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Certain Consumer Products [Docket No.: EERE-2013-BT-NOA-0047] (RIN: 1904-AD08) received April 11, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

5489. A letter from the Executive Director, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission,

transmitting the Commission's final rule — Annual Update of Filing Fees [Docket No.: RM14-6-000] received April 17, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

5490. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting a notice of a proposed lease with the Government of Sweden (Transmittal No. 06-14) pursuant to Section 62(a) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

5491. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting Transmittal No. 14-07, Notice of Proposed Issuance of Letter of Offer and Acceptance, pursuant to Section 36(b)(1) of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

5492. A letter from the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, transmitting a notice of a proposed lease with the Government of Sweden (Transmittal No.07-14) pursuant to Section 62(a) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

5493. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Commerce, transmitting consistent with the resolution of advice and consent to ratification of the Development, Production, Stockpiling, and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, adopted by the Senate of the United States on April 24, 1997, and Executive Order 13346 of July 8, 2004, certification for calendar year 2013; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

5494. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Commerce, transmitting a certification of export to China; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

5495. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of the Treasury, transmitting the Department's annual report for Fiscal Year 2013 prepared in accordance with Section 203 of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act), Public Law 107-174; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5496. A letter from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, transmitting the Office's annual report for Fiscal Year 2013 prepared in accordance with Section 203 of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act), Public Law 107-174; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5497. A letter from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, transmitting a report on Strategy and Schedule for Security Clearance Reciprocity; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

5498. A letter from the Chief, Branch of Listing, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Special Rule for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken [Docket No.: FWS-R2-ES-2012-0071: 4500030113] (RIN: 1018-AY21) received April 11, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

5499. A letter from the Chief, Branch of Listing, Endangered Species, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for Mazama Pocket Gophers [Docket No.: FWS-R1-ES-2013-0021] (RIN: 1018-AZ37) received April 11, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

5500. A letter from the Chief, Branch of Listing, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Determination of Threatened Status for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken [Docket No.: FWS-R2-ES-2012-0071; 4500030113] (RIN: 1018-AY21) received April 11, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

5501. A letter from the Chief, Branch of Endangered Species Listing, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule — Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Designation of Critical Habitat for Jaguar [Docket No.: FWS-R2-ES-2012-0042;4500030114] (RIN: 1018-AX13) received April 11, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Natural Resources.

5502. A letter from the Acting Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy, transmitting High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program 2014 Report to Congress, pursuant to Public Law 109-469; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

5503. A letter from the Vice President, Government Relations, Tennessee Valley Authority, transmitting the Statistical Summary for Fiscal Year 2013; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. LUETKEMEYER:

H.R. 4521. A bill to modify exemptions for small creditors and mortgage loan servicers, to require a study of appropriate capital requirements for mortgage servicing assets for nonsystemic banking institutions, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. ESTY, Mr. HIMES, Mr. CONNOLLY, Ms. NORTON, Ms. SLAUGHTER, and Mr. LANGEVIN):

H.R. 4522. A bill to establish the Green Bank to assist in the financing of qualified clean energy projects and qualified energy efficiency projects; to the Committee on Ways and Means, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. FARENTHOLD:

H.R. 4523. A bill to amend the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 with respect to the identification of high priority corridors on the National Highway System, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Ms. TITUS (for herself and Mr. MORAN):

H.R. 4524. A bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to require that covered persons develop and implement emergency contingency plans; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. MORAN (for himself, Mr. JONES, Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia, Ms. CHU, Mr. SCHIFF, and Mr. CÁRDENAS):

H.R. 4525. A bill to amend the Animal Welfare Act to restrict the use of exotic and non-domesticated animals in traveling circuses and exhibitions; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. RUSH (for himself, Mr. WHITFIELD, and Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio):

H.R. 4526. A bill to require the Secretary of Energy to establish and carry out a comprehensive program to improve education and training for energy-related jobs; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. MICHAUD (for himself and Ms. PINGREE of Maine):

H.R. 4527. A bill to remove a use restriction on land formerly a part of Acadia National Park that was transferred to the town of Tremont, Maine, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. LIPINSKI:

H.R. 4528. A bill to require a report and briefing to Congress explaining the procurement and inspection process for armored vehicles to transport civilian employees of the Department of Defense; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. PRICE of North Carolina:

H.R. 4529. A bill to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to require personal disclosure statements in all third-party communications advocating the election or defeat of a candidate, to require the disclosure of identifying information within paid communications made through the Internet, to apply disclosure requirements to prerecorded telephone calls, and for other purposes; to the Committee on House Administration.

By Mr. BURGESS (for himself and Mr. HUELSKAMP):

H.R. 4530. A bill to require the Secretary of State to offer rewards of up to $5,000,000 for information regarding the attacks on the United States diplomatic mission at Benghazi, Libya, that began on September 11, 2012; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas (for himself, Mr. BRADY of Texas, Mr. PAULSEN, Mr. TIBERI, Mr. BOUSTANY, Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania, Mr. MARCHANT, Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas, Ms. JENKINS, Mr. GERLACH, Mrs. BLACK, Mr. REICHERT, Mr. SCHOCK, Mr. ROSKAM, and Mr. RENACCI):

H.R. 4531. A bill to prohibit the provision of performance awards to employees of the Internal Revenue Service who owe back taxes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mrs. BEATTY (for herself and Mr. STIVERS):

H.R. 4532. A bill to amend the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act to specify when bank holding companies may be subject to certain enhanced supervision; to the Committee on Financial Services.

By Mr. COOPER (for himself, Mr. SMITH of Texas, and Mr. HIMES):

H.R. 4533. A bill to amend the Inspector General Act of 1978 to provide for the Inspector General of the National Security Agency to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and in addition to the Committees on the Judiciary, and Intelligence (Permanent Select), for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. CRAMER:

H.R. 4534. A bill to amend the Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act to require background checks before foster care placements are ordered in tribal court proceedings, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

By Mr. MCALLISTER:

H.R. 4535. A bill to provide for the conveyance of National Forest System land in the State of Louisiana; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. PETERS of California:

H.R. 4536. A bill to improve energy savings by the Department of Defense, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in

each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. RANGEL:

H.R. 4537. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income amounts received for personal injuries or sickness resulting from service as a qualified public safety employee; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. SENSENBRENNER (for himself, Mr. LARSEN of Washington, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, and Ms. MCCOLLUM):

H.R. 4538. A bill to amend the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 to establish a United States Ambassador at Large for Arctic Affairs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. AL GREEN of Texas (for himself, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. LEE of California, and Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD):

H. Res. 560. A resolution promoting minority health awareness and supporting the goals and ideals of National Minority Health Month in April 2014, which include bringing attention to the health disparities faced by minority populations of the United States, such as American Indians, Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Ms. JENKINS, and Ms. WILSON of Florida):

H. Res. 561. A resolution marking the 60th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. LUETKEMEYER:

H.R. 4521.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The constitutional authority on which this bill rests is the explicit power of Congress to regulate commerce in and among the states, as enumerate in Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3, the Commerce Clause, of the United States Constitution.

Additionally, Article 1, Section 7, Clause 2 of the Constitution allows for every bill passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate and signed by the President to be codified into law; and therefore implicitly allows Congress to repeal or amend any bill that has been passed by both chambers and signed into law by the President.

By Mr. VAN HOLLEN:

H.R. 4522.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

''This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted Congress under Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution.''

By Mr. FARENTHOLD:

H.R. 4523.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Sec. 8, Clause 3

By Ms. TITUS:

H.R. 4524.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Clause 18 of Section 8 of Article I of the United States Constitution

By Mr. MORAN:

H.R. 4525.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

This bill is enacted pursuant to the power granted to Congress under Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution.

By Mr. RUSH:

H.R. 4526.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1 Sec. 8 of the United States Constitution—The ability of the U.S. Congress to regulate Interstate Commerce.

The Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provides for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;. . . To regulate commerece with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes;. . .

By Mr. MICHAUD:

H.R. 4527.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3

By Mr. LIPINSKI:

H.R. 4528.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The constitutional authority of Congress to enact this legislation is provided by Article 1, section 8 of the United States Constitution (clauses 12, 13, 14, and 16), which grants Congress the power to raise and support an Army; to provide and maintain a Navy; to make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces; and to provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia.

By Mr. PRICE of North Carolina:

H.R. 4529.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

The General Welfare Clause, Art. 1, Sec. 8, of the U.S. Constitution.

By Mr. BURGESS:

H.R. 4530.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section IX, Clause 7 of the Constitution of the United States, which states: ''No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.'' In addition, the Necessary and Proper Clause, Article I, Section XIII, Clause 18 which states ''The Congress shall have Power to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers...'' Lastly, Article I, Section VIII, Clause 1 states ''The Congress shall have power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.''

By Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas:

H.R. 4531.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18, which states ''The Congress shall have Power To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by the Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.''

By Mrs. BEATTY:

H.R. 4532.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3 of the United States Constitution which grants Congress the power to regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.

By Mr. COOPER:

H.R. 4533.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18, which states that the Congress shall have the power to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

Article II, Section 2, Clause 2, which states that the President shall nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, judges of the Supreme Court, and all other officers of the United States, whose appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by law: but the Congress may by law vest the appointment of such inferior officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the courts of law, or in the heads of departments.

By Mr. CRAMER:

H.R. 4534.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, section 8, clause 3.

By Mr. MCALLISTER:

H.R. 4535.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I section 8

By Mr. PETERS of California:

H.R. 4536.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1, Section 8, clause 14

By Mr. RANGEL:

H.R. 4537.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article XVI of the Constitution—Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes on incomes. . .

By Mr. SENSENBRENNER:

H.R. 4538.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article 1 Section 8 Clause 18

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 6: Mr. GOSAR and Mr. MARCHANT.

H.R. 32: Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina.

H.R. 75: Mr. JONES.

H.R. 270: Mr. BLUMENAUER, Ms. LEE of California, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. RANGEL, and Mr. MCDERMOTT.

H.R. 318: Mr. TERRY.

H.R. 594: Mr. DELANEY.

H.R. 647: Mr. HENSARLING.

H.R. 755: Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina.

H.R. 855: Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER.

H.R. 942: Mr. ELLISON and Mr. FATTAH.

H.R. 963: Ms. SLAUGHTER.

H.R. 1020: Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California and Mr. JOLLY.

H.R. 1072: Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania.

H.R. 1141: Mr. VISCLOSKY.

H.R. 1179: Mrs. CAPITO and Mr. CRENSHAW.

H.R. 1180: Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. MOORE, Mr. PETERSON, and Mr. WELCH.

H.R. 1212: Mr. BARTON and Mr. HECK of Washington.

H.R. 1226: Mr. ROONEY.

H.R. 1250: Mr. FORTENBERRY.
H.R. 1318: Ms. JACKSON LEE.
H.R. 1441: Mr. ISRAEL.
H.R. 1449: Mr. WITTMAN, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Mr. BYRNE, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, Ms. JENKINS, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. DAINES, Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana, Mr. JOLLY, and Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 1507: Mrs. BUSTOS.
H.R. 1554: Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Ms. NORTON, and Mr. RUIZ.
H.R. 1726: Mr. FARENTHOLD.
H.R. 1738: Mrs. BUSTOS, Ms. DELBENE, and Mr. THOMPSON of California.
H.R. 1764: Mr. BISHOP of Utah.
H.R. 1801: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas.
H.R. 1828: Ms. SCHWARTZ and Mr. GIBSON.
H.R. 1837: Mr. CONNOLLY and Mr. CROWLEY.
H.R. 1893: Mr. POCAN.
H.R. 2084: Mr. MEADOWS and Mr. VELA.
H.R. 2123: Mr. MICHAUD.
H.R. 2139: Ms. CLARKE of New York.
H.R. 2144: Mr. LOWENTHAL.
H.R. 2302: Mr. PETERSON.
H.R. 2548: Mr. CRAMER.
H.R. 2553: Mr. LEVIN.
H.R. 2638: Mr. CHABOT, Mr. BROOKS of Alabama, Mr. MEADOWS, Mr. DESANTIS, and Mr. LATHAM.
H.R. 2662: Ms. PINGREE of Maine and Mr. CICILLINE.
H.R. 2896: Mr. DOGGETT.
H.R. 2932: Mr. RUNYAN, Mr. RIGELL, Mr. SENSENBRENNER, Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. FATTAH, Ms. NORTON, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, and Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York.
H.R. 2992: Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.
H.R. 2994: Mr. PETERS of Michigan, Ms. TSONGAS, and Ms. BASS.
H.R. 2996: Mrs. HARTZLER and Mr. LOEBSACK.
H.R. 3335: Mr. GARDNER.
H.R. 3344: Mr. HONDA, Mr. JOLLY, and Mr. LEVIN.
H.R. 3377: Mr. HENSARLING.
H.R. 3424: Mr. SWALWELL of California and Mr. ENYART.
H.R. 3456: Mr. LAMBORN.
H.R. 3461: Mr. LEVIN.
H.R. 3482: Mr. SCALISE.
H.R. 3510: Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. CONYERS, Ms. DELAURO, Ms. LEE of California, Mr. RUSH, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. NADLER, and Mr. DOYLE.
H.R. 3530: Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mr. JOLLY, Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. GOWDY, Mr. LEVIN, Mr. COBLE, Mr. NADLER, Mr. MARINO, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Mr. HECK of Nevada, Mr. DESANTIS, and Mr. COTTON.
H.R. 3538: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY and Mr. POCAN.
H.R. 3610: Ms. MATSUI, Mr. DELANEY, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, and Mr. NADLER.
H.R. 3689: Mr. GARDNER.
H.R. 3707: Mr. LOWENTHAL, Ms. CHU, and Mrs. DAVIS of California.
H.R. 3708: Mr. MEADOWS.
H.R. 3717: Mr. ISRAEL.
H.R. 3747: Mr. GIBSON, Mr. GARDNER, Ms. KAPTUR, and Ms. MCCOLLUM.
H.R. 3836: Mr. TAKANO, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. DELANEY.
H.R. 3929: Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. NADLER.
H.R. 3930: Mr. BRIDENSTINE, Mr. YOHO, Mr. LANCE, Mr. SHUSTER, Mr. MCHENRY, and Mr. MEEHAN.
H.R. 3970: Mr. MCDERMOTT and Mr. VAN HOLLEN.
H.R. 4031: Mr. HECK of Nevada, Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. HASTINGS of Washington, and Mr. MULVANEY.
H.R. 4056: Mr. BYRNE.
H.R. 4060: Mr. FLEISCHMANN.
H.R. 4128: Mr. CARNEY.
H.R. 4148: Ms. LOFGREN.
H.R. 4156: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, and Mr. GARCIA.
H.R. 4157: Mr. GRAVES of Missouri.
H.R. 4159: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. HOLT, and Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 4178: Mr. VEASEY.
H.R. 4188: Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. LANGEVIN, Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, and Mr. MCKINLEY.
H.R. 4190: Mr. ENYART.
H.R. 4219: Mr. KIND.
H.R. 4225: Ms. ESTY, Mrs. BUSTOS, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Ms. FRANKEL of Florida, Ms. TITUS, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Ms. SINEMA, Ms. MOORE, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Ms. MENG, and Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York.
H.R. 4228: Mr. POMPEO, Mr. YOUNG of Indiana, Mr. CARTER, and Mr. BARLETTA.
H.R. 4249: Mr. COHEN.
H.R. 4250: Mr. LATTA.
H.R. 4291: Mr. COTTON.
H.R. 4305: Mr. ENYART.
H.R. 4317: Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 4318: Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 4325: Mr. HONDA and Mr. SWALWELL of California.
H.R. 4349: Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina.
H.R. 4351: Mr. BRIDENSTINE, Mr. FORTENBERRY, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, and Mr. GARAMENDI.
H.R. 4370: Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana.
H.R. 4373: Mr. CARTWRIGHT.
H.R. 4399: Mr. TAKANO and Mrs. KIRKPATRICK.
H.R. 4407: Mr. LATTA and Mr. HUIZENGA of Michigan.
H.R. 4411: Mr. WILSON of South Carolina, Mr. SESSIONS, Ms. BROWN of Florida, Ms. FOXX, Mr. NADLER, Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas, Mr. STIVERS, Mr. LAMALFA, Mr. COBLE, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. GRAVES of Missouri, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. MCKINLEY, Mr. FINCHER, Mr. LATTA, Mr. SIRES, Mr. HOLDING, Mr. ROSKAM, Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. SCHWEIKERT, Mr. PITTENGER, Mr. GINGREY of Georgia, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. PRICE of Georgia, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. BENTIVOLIO, Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. MEEKS, and Ms. GABBARD.
H.R. 4440: Mr. SCHIFF, Mr. ENGEL, Mr. MORAN, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. DEUTCH, Mr. JONES, and Mr. HARRIS.
H.R. 4446: Mr. KLINE and Mr. ROTHFUS.
H.R. 4485: Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. PINGREE of Maine, and Mr. SMITH of Washington.
H.R. 4489: Mr. LONG, Ms. JENKINS, and Mr. BUTTERFIELD.
H.R. 4490: Mr. STOCKMAN and Mr. LOWENTHAL.
H.R. 4494: Mr. VAN HOLLEN.
H.R. 4511: Mr. COURTNEY, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Ms. PINGREE of Maine, Ms. TITUS, and Mr. RANGEL.
H.J. Res. 34: Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York.
H.J. Res. 41: Mr. CASSIDY.
H. Con. Res. 95: Ms. KUSTER and Mr. PETERSON.
H. Res. 190: Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. LYNCH, and Mr. COHEN.
H. Res. 284: Mr. DENT.
H. Res. 422: Mr. TIERNEY.
H. Res. 489: Mr. RIBBLE.
H. Res. 508: Mr. SALMON.
H. Res. 525: Ms. TITUS.
H. Res. 552: Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mr. SERRANO, and Mr. JEFFRIES.
H. Res. 556: Mrs. NAPOLITANO, Mr. NUGENT, Mr. BUCHANAN, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, and Ms. SLAUGHTER.
H. Res. 559: Mr. GRIJALVA and Mr. CASTRO of Texas.

DELETIONS OF SPONSORS FROM PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were deleted from public bills and resolutions, as follows:

H.R. 3344: Mr. GINGREY of Georgia.

AMENDMENTS

Under clause 8 of rule XVIII, proposed amendments were submitted as follows:

H.R. 4486

OFFERED BY: MS. CASTOR OF FLORIDA

AMENDMENT NO. 6: Page 3, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert ''(increased by $9,800,000)''.

Page 11, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert ''(reduced by $9,800,000)''.

H.R. 4486

OFFERED BY: MR. TERRY

AMENDMENT NO. 7: Page 54, after line 12, insert the following:

SEC. 224. None of the funds made available in this Act for ''Department of Veterans Affairs—Departmental Administration—General Administration'' for administrative expenses of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may be obligated or expended until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs meets with the Nebraska delegation to discuss alternative options for the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital planned for construction in Omaha, Nebraska.

H.R. 4486

OFFERED BY: MR. ROSS

AMENDMENT NO. 8: At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Defense to close a commissary store.

H.R. 4486

AMENDMENT NO. 9: OFFERED BY: MR. GRAYSON

At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new section:

SEC. __. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enter into a contract with any offeror or any of its principals if the offeror certifies, as required by Federal Acquisition Regulation, that the offeror or any of its principals:

(A) within a three-year period preceding this offer has been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against it for: commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes relating to the submission of offers; or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, tax evasion, violating Federal criminal tax laws, or receiving stolen property; or

(B) are presently indicted for, or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with, commission of any of the offenses enumerated above in subsection (A); or

(C) within a three-year period preceding this offer, has been notified of any delinquent Federal taxes in an amount that exceeds $3,000 for which the liability remains unsatisfied.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 2014 No. 63

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O divine Master, incline the hearts of our lawmakers to follow in Your way. May they seek to stay within the circle of Your providential plan for their lives, striving to please You as they live for Your glory. Lord, deliver them from crooked thoughts, careless words, and selfish hearts. Forgive them for the things undone that ought to have been done and the things done that ought not to have been done. Spirit of purity and grace, guide our Senators with Your power.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter.

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 30, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MINIMUM WAGE FAIRNESS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 354, the minimum-wage legislation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 354, S. 2223, a bill to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend increased expensing limitations and the treatment of certain real property as section 179 property.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in morning business until 10:30 a.m. this morning. The Republicans will control the first half and the majority will control the final half. Following morning business, the time until noon will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees prior to a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the minimum-wage bill at 12 p.m. today. At 4 p.m. there will be additional rollcall votes in relation to nominations.

Mr. President, later today, as I have announced, we are going to have, we hope, the beginning of a debate on the increase of the Federal minimum wage. Millions of American workers will be watching how each Senator votes today. To them it is a matter of survival.

They will be observing to see if we ensure that a full-time worker in America receives a livable wage.

For Republicans, this vote will demonstrate whether they truly care about our economy. Republicans have fashioned themselves over the years as defenders of the economy. Congressional Republicans have told the American people they are the party of jobs and financial prosperity. How illogical then that the Senate Republicans today will not be supportive of legislation to increase the minimum wage.

What is preventing my Republican colleagues from giving the American workers a livable wage—a fair shot—knowing that 75 percent of the American people support increasing the minimum wage? If Americans are searching for an answer as to why they would refuse to raise the minimum wage, they should look no farther than the Republicans' billionaire benefactors—I repeat, billionaire benefactors—the Koch brothers. Absolutely no one was surprised yesterday when Americans for Prosperity, which is only one of the Koch-funded political organizations, instructed Republicans in Congress to vote against a minimum-wage increase. They said: We are going to score this vote.

What does that mean? It means if you vote yes, you are not going to get any help from Charlie and David. They want a ''no'' vote so they can make Charlie and Dave happy.

In case any of their followers in the Senate were to experience a change of heart and be inclined to vote for an increase, the organizations have warned that they will really go after these people. Again, I repeat, score the vote.

In other words, when it comes time for the Koch brothers to play the role of Santa Claus, Republicans should know that Charles and David are making a list and checking it twice—probably more than that. Even though 75 percent of Americans support this legislation—and our economy stands to profit from a wage increase—the will of the Koch brothers seems to be the top priority for my Republican colleagues.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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Former Governor Pawlenty, who was considered by many people in the last election cycle to be the right person for the Republicans to nominate for President, came out today strongly and said words to the effect of: I am not afraid of the Koch brothers. I believe the minimum wage should be increased.

My Republican colleagues should listen to this respected Republican leader.

To add to the Republicans' theater of the absurd, the House of Representatives Budget Committee is holding a hearing today on poverty in America. How about that.

The Presiding Officer will recall that committee chairman PAUL RYAN ran for Vice President. He was part of the ticket that labeled 47 percent of Americans as moochers and not deserving the Republicans' attention—moochers. Representative PAUL RYAN himself has even called struggling Americans ''takers.'' Taking into account his well-documented disdain for hard-working Americans trying to help their families, I am anxious to learn how Representative RYAN plans to eradicate poverty since he considers them takers and moochers. Maybe he will need to check with the Koch brothers first, as it seems he did with his recent budget proposal.

While House Republicans hold hearings and Senate Republicans do nothing, Senate Democrats are doing something. We continue to propose meaningful legislation, such as this minimum-wage bill, that gives American families a fair shot at prosperity. The Republicans filibustered extended unemployment benefits. They filibustered giving women the right to make the same amount of money as men. Why should my daughter get 77 cents when a man doing the same job she does gets $1? It is unfair, but they filibustered that. We are going to continue to propose meaningful legislation.

Senate Republicans assert that increasing the minimum wage will not help working families. That assertion is not only wrong, it makes no sense. It is illogical. Twenty-eight million Americans stand to benefit from an increase in the minimum wage. I repeat: About 10 percent of all Americans stand to gain from the legislation before this body. We are going to vote to see if we can begin debate at noon today.

Republicans assert that boosting the minimum wage would hurt businesses and slow down our economic recovery. Almost 75 percent of small businesses support raising the minimum wage. Why? It creates more business for them. It is good for the economy. The assertion that boosting the minimum wage would hurt businesses, again, is wrong and it is illogical.

Researchers at the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank have found consumer spending increases—yes, increases—dramatically following a minimum-wage hike and businesses reap the benefits of a minimum-wage increase. That is what these experts said. This minimum-wage legislation is good for American workers, businesses, and the economy, but Republicans refuse to even allow us to debate the issue. Instead, they have signaled their intention to filibuster the minimum-wage legislation just as they have filibustered virtually everything the President suggested during the past 5 years.

When it comes to helping working-class families, the Republicans in Washington are echoing what the Republican leader declared last week in Kentucky: It is not my job to create jobs.

Well, it is his job. It is the Republicans' job, it is my job, and it is the job of every Member of Congress to do everything we can to help create jobs. That is why in addition to raising the minimum wage, which will create jobs, we believe there should be something done about the infrastructure deficit we have in this country which would help create tens of thousands of jobs. It is so badly needed.

Today we have an opportunity to help our hard-working constituents from sea to shining sea and show them that we are attentive to their needs.

I urge my Republican colleagues to join us and Governor Pawlenty and give American workers a fair shot at the American dream by ensuring they are paid a livable wage. At the end of the day our job is to give every American a fair shot to provide for themselves and their families—no welfare, just a job.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Will the Chair announce the business of the day.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to start this morning by reading an excerpt from a 1998 memo from Gene Sperling to President Clinton. It relates to a minimum-wage proposal similar to the one we are considering today. Here is what he wrote:

> Your entire economic team believes that this approach is too aggressive and are concerned that . . . [it] could prove damaging to employment prospects of low-skilled workers, as well as to the general macroeconomic performance of the economy.

But the memo noted there was a plus side to supporting that proposal. ''[It] would unify [the] liberal wing of the Democratic party.''

Today feels like déjà vu all over again because even though our constituents keep telling us they expect Washington to focus on jobs, that is clearly not what they are getting from the Senate. Instead, Senate Democrats are pushing legislation today that would cost as many as 1 million jobs in this country—legislation that the left flank of their party demands. That is their response to the pleas of our constituents to do something about jobs—a proposal that nonpartisan analysts tell us could cost jobs.

But then again, these are the same Washington Democrats who have been at the helm of our economy for 5½ years, the same ones who have been bragging about a recovery for the past 4.

We learned this morning the economy grew by just 0.1 percent—0.1 percent. So I can assure you that if this is the Democrats' idea of a recovery, the people in my State at least are not terribly impressed. They are ready for new ideas. They are ready to turn the page from the liberal playbook that just has not worked.

It is clearer every day that the DC liberal establishment is completely out of ideas. They do not even pretend to be serious about jobs anymore. The clearest proof of that is today's vote—on a bill that could cost about 17,000 jobs in Kentucky alone, and potentially as many as a million nationwide.

But Senate Democrats do not seem to care. They do not seem to care that about 6 in 10 Americans oppose a bill like this if—if—it means losing hundreds of thousands of American jobs. Washington Democrats' true focus these days seems to be making the far left happy—not helping the middle class.

They seem to think they can coast on talking points and stale ideas and that the American people have not been paying attention to their recent dismal record at actually helping the people they claim to care about.

They seem to think people will not notice that time and time and time again they have ended up making things harder for the people they claim they want to help.

But the American people see through that game. It is crystal clear from new polling that we have seen this week.

People realize the Washington liberal establishment is just out of energy and out of ideas. If they did not realize it before this year, they got confirmation of it when Senate Democrats effectively admitted that their so-called agenda for the rest of the year was drafted by campaign staffers.

In short, Washington Democrats are just not serious about helping the middle class. That helps explain why they would even consider legislation that we all know could cost up to a million jobs at a time when Americans need those jobs more than ever.

It helps explain why satisfying their leftwing patrons has become a more urgent priority than helping to create the kind of well-paying middle-class jobs our country needs.

I think our constituents deserve a lot better than what they have been getting this year from Democrats who control the Senate. They are already struggling under the weight of Washington Democrats' last ideological adventure—ObamaCare.

Washington Democrats promised the Sun and the Moon to sell that law, and then just rammed it through anyway when Americans refused to buy what they were selling.

Washington Democrats told us ObamaCare would lower costs, but polls show that nearly twice as many people believe the government is adding secret mind-control technology to our TVs as believe the law is actually decreasing health care costs.

Washington Democrats promised Americans that they could keep their plans if they liked them too. As we know, that turned out to be the ''Lie of the Year.''

Washington Democrats downplayed ObamaCare's negative impact on jobs, just as they are doing with this legislation we will consider later today.

Yet the government's own nonpartisan analysis shows that ObamaCare will effectively drive 2.5 million people out of the American workforce. We are already seeing the effects in Kentucky, where hospitals are laying off workers and cutting salaries because of the impact of this law.

One of the largest health care systems in the State recently let go nearly 500 employees, and its CEO stated that ObamaCare was a factor in that decision. The head of another community hospital in Glasgow, KY, also said that ObamaCare was a factor in his hospital's recent decision to reduce salaries and cut as many as 49 employees.

It is happening at other businesses too.

As a result of ObamaCare, a company in Kentucky with 8,000 employees was forced to cut part-time workers' hours to below 30 hours a week. That was a difficult decision—one that particular company, like so many others, never wanted to make because of the impact it will have on its own employees, but one that it felt was necessary to comply with ObamaCare.

I recently read a story about Paul Deskins, who runs an auto dealership in Pikeville with about 50 employees. Paul says that ObamaCare might force him to reduce his workforce or sell his body shop altogether. ''We were hoping that Obama thing would go away,'' he said. Millions of Americans feel the same way.

Washington Democrats promised this law would help the little guy, but it ended up hurting many of the people it purported to help.

We are seeing the same thing with the legislation before us today. Six in 10 Americans do not want a policy like this if—if—it costs jobs. No matter how Senate Democrats try to spin their support for this bill, the bottom line is this: It could cost up to 1 million American jobs—17,000 of those jobs in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. That is really the opposite of what Americans expect us to do on jobs.

So it is time for Washington Democrats to drop the tired ideological approach that has failed so miserably the last 5½ years. It is time for them to work with Republicans to boost job creation and start helping the middle class. That has been Republicans' focus all along, and it is about time Washington Democrats joined us in working for the middle class too.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise today out of a genuine concern that the foreign policy that our administration is conducting is creating danger for the U.S. citizenry and creating danger throughout the world. Let me speak a little bit about that.

I think all of us have seen what happened in Syria when the administration had an opportunity on the front end of a conflict to put its thumb on the scale to change the dynamic of what was happening inside the country and stated that it would do so. It did not.

This weekend I was at a security conference and people on both sides of the aisle expressed dismay at the way the administration had conducted its operations—or actually had not conducted it operations in Syria, and yet had stated so many times what it was going to do.

Today we find ourselves in a situation where I am absolutely certain that one of the policies we will end up carrying out in Syria will be a counterterrorism policy because of our concern about the fact that because we did not act when we could—not with American boots on the ground; that is not what anybody has proposed—but when the administration could have done something to prevent the disaster that has occurred there, to prevent 60,000 more Syrians from being killed indiscriminately—in many cases by helicopters from the administration dropping barrel bombs on innocent civilians there—when the administration could have acted to keep those types of atrocities from occurring, to keep Al Qaeda and other extremists from coming into the country—when it said it was going to act and did not, when it could have done that—now we are going to find ourselves, very quickly, in a situation, in my opinion, where we realize this is a threat to our homeland, and we are going to be engaged in counterterrorism activities.

I say that as a predicate to the issue I am going to discuss, which is Ukraine.

So many Members of our body have recently been to Ukraine. As a matter of fact, I count 12 Members—Members on both sides of the aisle—who have spent time visiting Ukraine and going to Maidan and seeing what the people there did. They rose up to hope for a free world, to hope for human rights, to hope for democracy, and to rid the country of corruption.

Today, we have a prime minister who is young, who is taking on the issues of the day, and doing everything he can to usher this country into a new era—a country that is destined to join the West on its current path.

At the same time, we see a country whose greatest threat to that occurring is Russia—a country that, as we know, illegally went into Crimea and annexed it, a country that today has 40,000 troops on the border, a country that has black ops operators inside eastern Ukraine, the industrial part of Ukraine that it hopes over time will, in a sense, become a part of what they are doing in Russia.

We see every day the destabilization occurring. We know the most important next step in Ukraine is for them to go to this May 25 election and have an election that the world community believes was a valid election. Yet we know that daily Putin and Russia do everything they can to destabilize Ukraine and to delegitimize this process of elections and moving forward.

So a number of us, out of grave concern for what is happening—out of concern about where this is going to lead America, where this is going to lead Europe—have come together to write a piece of legislation because what we have seen from the administration is a lot of rhetoric. Unfortunately, what we see is an administration that cannot help itself but to try to be in every 24-hour news circle, talking about what it is going to do, but then when it actually comes to the time of actually doing it, that is not what has occurred.

This week I was very disappointed when the administration unveiled its next round of sanctions. We had all hoped the administration would put in place sectoral sanctions, sanctions that would have an impact on the Russian economy, so that Putin and all those around him who are carrying out these activities would understand they would pay a price for what they are doing illegally in this part of the world, which, by the way, goes against the agreements we all came to around the Budapest Memorandum, where we said we would honor the sovereignty of this country.

For that reason, a number of us have come together to write a piece of legislation. It is legislation that is intended to try to drive an outcome. It is a piece of legislation that moves away from the way the administration has been dealing with this, where they are always a day late and a dollar short. They are always responding to what Russia does. They are always doing something that, in essence, deals with the situation after something bad has already occurred. This legislation is designed to, again, drive an outcome, to show the administration there is a strategic way to deal with this issue.

Let me tell you what this does not do. I was very disappointed to pick up the Wall Street Journal this morning and read on the front page that those of us who are concerned—which, by the way, is strongly bipartisan, strongly bipartisan in this Senate: concern about what is happening in Ukraine and concern about the fact that the administration has not done those things with economic sanctions in a stronger way to cause Russia to pay a price for what it is doing—but I was very disappointed to pick up the paper and read where the President said those people who want to see military action by the United States in Ukraine—that is not what this bill does. As a matter of fact, what the bill does is it lays out a strategy to try to keep that from happening, which I think numbers of us on both sides of the aisle are concerned that under the current policy of saying what we are going to do and not doing it, of basically continuing to allow Russia to do what it is doing inside eastern Ukraine, that this is actually the very policy that could lead to significant problems down the road. We all understand these are how major conflicts unfold, and we all understand we are talking about two countries that are armed with nuclear weapons.

So today at noon a number of us will gather around and introduce a piece of legislation that does three things.

No. 1, it strengthens NATO. I think everyone would agree that the commitment of NATO to its allies, our commitment to NATO, our partners' commitment to NATO, has waned over the last period of time.

By the way, this is not something that has just occurred under this administration. It has been going on for some time. We have only three countries, as a matter of fact—three countries—within the NATO alliance that are actually honoring their commitments relative to the support of NATO.

So the first piece of this is to strengthen NATO. It is to expedite, by the way, this administration's own plan relative to missile defense—the plan they have laid out. It does not change that technology.

The second piece of this legislation is intended to deter Russia from what it is doing.

If my colleagues remember, the Geneva accords said Putin would move the Russian troops who are intimidating people inside Eastern Ukraine away from the border. But I think what we have seen now is that ''red line'' has changed. Now what the administration is focused on is them actually not going inside the country, but all of us understand that Russia is actually accomplishing what it wishes to accomplish inside Ukraine without even sending troops in because they are able to do it again with black ops.

So this piece of legislation that my friend from Wyoming and so many others were involved in developing lays down clear sanctions first—beginning today, or after passage, beginning with sanctions—sanctions that hit several important entities in the banking sector and in the energy sector, so we actually do something that affects the Russian economy until such time that they pull those troops away from the border and they remove those black ops operators inside the country who are fomenting the problems.

Secondly, in the event Russia does actually cross the border with military troops, this bill again imposes much deeper sanctions on Russia and certainly signifies to them what kind of price they would pay.

Again, earlier this week when the administration put forth its sanctions, it was a marvel to see that the stock market in Russia, several days in a row, continued to go up. It had no affect on Russia, none. Editorial writers and people on both sides of the aisle understand this was nothing more than a slap on the wrist. Putin understands that. Russia understands that. They understand that we as a nation so far have not signified that we are willing to use these economic sanctions in a way—through the President's own Executive order, I might add—to change behavior. So we are very concerned about the direction this is taking.

The third thing this bill will do is harden our non-NATO allies. I think my colleagues know that in the country of Moldavia, from where I just recently returned—and Senator BARRASSO on another trip just recently returned as well—and in Georgia and in Ukraine, there are a number of things we need to do as a nation to help them harden their country and this bill lays objective things out. Let me give one example. In the Russian-speaking area of Eastern Ukraine, the only information the people who are Russian-speaking in that part of the world are receiving is coming from Russia. It is propaganda about actions the United States is taking, which we aren't, and the great lives they will have if Russia is able to annex that part of the world. So at a minimum we need to make sure the information those people are receiving is very different. There are so many actions that we as a nation can be taking to ensure that Ukraine is not destabilized, that Moldavia is not destabilized, that Georgia is not destabilized.

Let me say this in closing because I see my friend is ready to speak on another topic. This bill we are introducing today is a serious piece of legislation. As a matter of fact, I am gratified by the work so many Members have put into making this legislation as it is. It is strategic. It is serious. It tries to accomplish a good outcome. I hope the introduction of this legislation will cause the administration to step away from the microphones and the cameras and to step away from the empty rhetoric that has been shared all across this world, to step back and say wouldn't it be good if we laid out a strategic approach to Europe.

It is time we realized Russia is destabilizing Europe, and that affects our citizens. Our citizens are 4½ percent of the world in population. We benefit from 22 percent of the world's gross domestic product. So the fact of the world being secure is not only important to us because of human rights and democracy and freedom, but it is important to the very livelihoods of the people of our country.

So I thank those involved. I look forward to discussing this more fully at noon today when we unveil this. Again, I hope the White House and those involved in setting foreign policy will step back, they will sit down, and they will begin to do take actions that strengthen NATO more fully. I hope they will take those actions that will certainly cause Russia to understand exactly what will happen if they continue on the path they are on, as well as strengthen our non-NATO allies which, because of the policies we have not put in place, are continually being destabilized.

Mr. CORKER. I yield the floor and I thank the Chair for the time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, first, I commend my friend and colleague from Tennessee for his leadership on foreign affairs and his efforts in these areas. I fully support all of his efforts to bring forth a united position on behalf of our country.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor because the American people have just received more horrible news about our economy.

The Commerce Department reported this morning that our economy grew at the smallest rate in 3 years. The exact number is 0.1 percent—much worse than expected. To be specific, investment in business equipment declined, residential home construction declined, U.S. exports fell sharply, and companies increased inventories at a much slower rate.

I wish to read what some of the economists have said about this. Dan North, a chief economist, said:

> We've been living in sub-3 percent land, and people have gotten used to that as the new normal. But it's not. It's anemic.

To make matters worse, the Financial Times this morning is reporting

that China is poised this year to pass the United States as the world's leading economic power.

The American people deserve better than this and they shouldn't have to accept that anemic growth as the new normal. They deserve growth, good jobs, and better opportunities. That is not what they are finding from the Obama economy. Instead, the President continues to push an agenda that makes it harder for Americans to find good jobs and to bring home bigger paychecks. So I wish to speak about how the health care law specifically is slowing growth and how it is making American paychecks smaller.

I met earlier today with business leaders from Wyoming. They are here from Casper, Cheyenne, and Jackson, and I have heard input from them regarding how the health care law has impacted their businesses, how it has impacted our State of Wyoming, and how it has impacted our economy not just in Wyoming but nationwide.

It is interesting to watch the White House and the President specifically spike the ball, claiming that 8 million people signed up for health insurance through the government exchanges. At the same time, President Obama has declared that the national debate about his health care law is over. The meaning of the number is highly questionable, and the administration's victory lap is premature. In fact, the ObamaCare debate is far from over.

So I come to the floor to speak about additional side effects of the Obama health care law. I will continue to do this week after week because the side effects on the American people and the American economy and on health care in this country continue to be very damaging.

I will speak about smaller paychecks as one of the ObamaCare side effects, to point out that the debate is not over for the millions of Americans who are experiencing the negative side effects of the President's health care law voted on by Democrats and not by Republicans. One of the worst of these side effects is the smaller paychecks many families are experiencing specifically because of the mandates of the health care law. It is happening all around the country.

Let me tell my colleagues what is happening as reported by the New Hampshire Union Leader. This is just one example. The article was talking about small businesses that have found that paperwork and costs related to the law are threatening the economic platforms on which their companies are built. It quoted a man who runs a ski area saying the law could mean he has to open later in the season and close earlier in the season. That is because people on his payroll for 120 consecutive days or longer have to be offered health insurance under the Democrats' health care law.

Mother Nature might say there is plenty of snow, the skiers and snow boarders are ready to go, the resort wants to open, restaurants are ready to serve people, hotels are ready to host people, but ObamaCare says the resort can't open without facing enormous costs for Washington-mandated insurance. It is hurting people working at the ski resorts. It is hurting people in businesses in those communities.

Who pays for the negative side effects? It is the seasonal workers who will now be limited to fewer than 120 days of work at ski facilities such as this one in New Hampshire. They will work fewer days with smaller paychecks because of the health care law. The New Hampshire Union Leader summed it up this way: ''As snowboarders say: bummer.''

It is not just seasonal workers who are being hurt. This column also talks about the ski resorts in Colorado being hurt.

In North Carolina, State government agencies are starting to get very worried about how to deal with the health care law's mandates. The law says employers—including State and local governments—have to cover people who work 30 hours a week or more. That is whom the law considers full-time workers. When I talk to business leaders from Wyoming, most people think of full-time work as 40 hours. Not President Obama. He is a 30-hour man.

According to a story from WTVD in Raleigh, State agencies are looking at cutting the hours of part-time workers to keep them under that 30-hour limit.

The North Carolina Agriculture Department has about 250 part-time employees who are now working more than 30 hours. They have 250 workers in the North Carolina Agriculture Department, and those 250 people are working more than 30 hours, but they are part time. The North Carolina Department of Transportation has almost 600 people in the same situation. So North Carolina is going to have to look very closely at what to do with those people, and that can mean smaller paychecks.

Local governments are having to make these same decisions because of the health care law. WITN, another station in Greenville, NC, did a story last month about how schools are cutting the hours substitute teachers can work—the same 30-hour Obama workweek limit again. The health care law wasn't about substitute teachers, but they are the ones feeling the negative side effects and they are the ones seeing smaller paychecks.

The story quoted a teacher in Pitt County, NC, who said she got a letter from the school district there telling her she wouldn't be able to work as much. Substitute teachers are now limited to 3 days a week. Why? Because of the expensive mandates of ObamaCare.

She told the TV station, ''I'm willing and able to work, and now they're telling me I can only work for so long.''

This teacher is one of 200 in her North Carolina school district who are going to be limited to 21 hours a week, and she is wondering how she is going to make ends meet with 21 hours a week. That is a side effect of the health care law that means smaller paychecks for substitute teachers.

President Obama says the debate is over. Is it over for teachers in North Carolina who are seeing their time cut to under 30 hours a week? Is it over in ski resort communities in New Hampshire and in Colorado?

Look what is going on in Iowa. An article just last week in the Ottumwa Courier said that a local school district was cutting the hours on all paraeducators from 37 hours per week to 29 hours. Those extra hours may not mean much to Democrats on the floor of the Senate or the House Members who voted for this health care law, but they are a real big deal for a lot of families struggling in the Obama economy.

In Colorado, the Aspen Daily News reported last month that adjunct professors at Colorado Mountain College are going to have the same limit of 29 hours a week. This school has 112 full-time faculty, but it has 600 part-time professors. Some of them just want to teach a class here or there to make extra money, but some of them are trying to string together enough hours to support themselves, to support their families, and they are getting hammered by the President's health care law that every Democrat in this body voted for.

It is happening all over the country. We have heard stories today about New Hampshire, North Carolina, Colorado. Here is a final example. A borough in Alaska announced earlier this year that it was putting a cap on the hours of firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

According to one technician, some stations are limiting people to just 24 hours a week. So we see teachers, firefighters, professors, seasonal workers all hurt by the side effects of the Obama health care law, and they are all getting hit with smaller paychecks—nothing they have asked for. They want to work. They are ready to work. They are willing to work.

We have a weak economy, an anemic economy, and the President and Democrats do not seem to care. They do not seem to care. They think the debate is over. President Obama says the debate is over.

He says Democrats who voted for this should forcefully defend it and be proud. How can the President forcefully defend these smaller paychecks? How can the President be proud of these smaller paychecks because of his law and what he had Democrats vote for—in North Carolina; Alaska, where you hear these stories; New Hampshire; one after another after another; Colorado.

Well, it is not over for Americans, who are continuing to get hit in their wallets, people in New Hampshire, North Carolina, Iowa, Colorado, Alaska, all over the rest of the country. It is not over for Republicans, who will continue to stand for those Americans

and keep pushing for commonsense reforms that will actually help people get the care and what they wanted all along, which was better access to quality, affordable health care.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and that following my remarks Senator FRANKEN be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes and Senator MARKEY be permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise this morning to talk about the matter before us, which is the minimum wage. Today the Senate will vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, the legislation we are considering, which would increase the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour over the course of 3 years. We do not know what the result will be today, but we are working to get as much support as possible because getting past this first hurdle, of course, is essential to getting the bill passed, to giving Americans who are working very hard a fair shot at some economic security that they may not have right now.

We have a lot of work to do because there are still people out there—especially here in Washington—who are making arguments that do not make a lot of sense and, to me, do not make a lot of sense to the people of Pennsylvania. Where I came from, when someone works a full day and a full week, they should not—most people believe they should have a fair shot at making not just a living but making sure they have enough of a living that they can lift themselves out of poverty. You should not work 40 hours a week and be paid a poverty wage. Unfortunately, that is the case for far too many Americans.

Increasing the minimum wage would help workers make ends meet, and it would offer a lift up the ladder to the middle class and boost the economy by boosting new spending. We know that is the case. All the data shows that. All the studies show that. But we still have to make the case to some folks here in Washington.

Wages for most workers are not keeping up with the cost of living, the cost of paying a mortgage and raising a family and some of the other middle-class concerns. The pay for minimum-wage workers is not keeping up with inflation.

Six years have passed since the last minimum wage increase was enacted. Pay for the middle class is stagnant, while the gap between the haves and the have-nots has widened substantially.

The chart on my right tells the story of what could happen if we are able to pass an increase in the minimum wage. It is about giving a fair shot to our families and to our workers by raising the minimum wage. Increasing the minimum wage helps a lot of folks across the country more broadly. Of course, it helps working families.

Look at these numbers. Workers who would get a raise: 27.8 million workers across the country. There are very few things the Senate can do today or this week that would provide that kind of direct economic jump-start to so many communities and to 27.8 million people.

Look at the boost to GDP. I mentioned that earlier—a $22 billion boost to the economy. Again, there are very few things, if any, we could pass in the Senate that would provide that kind of jump-start to the economy when we need it.

The number of jobs created across the country: some 85,000. Some think the number is higher than that. I know this would have a job-increase impact into the thousands in Pennsylvania.

Look at the number for women. There is mostly an issue about women who are working every day trying to support their families. It also has an impact, obviously, on children. Women who would get a raise: 15.3 million women across the country. I would like to hear someone who is on the other side of the aisle demonstrate to women across this country what they will do in place of that if they are going to say that now is not the time for a raise in the minimum wage. What about those women who are shouldering most of the burden to raise their families and to make their way in a tough economy?

Children with a parent who would get a raise: 14 million children have a parent who would get a boost in the minimum wage. Again, I would say: What is your answer or what is your strategy to give a boost but really, more appropriately stated, a measure of security to our children? I am not sure I can name another action this Senate could take to make sure 14 million children have a measure of security that they do not have today even in an economy that—in some parts of the country—is getting a little better.

Americans overall lifted out of poverty: 2 million Americans will be lifted out of poverty if we pass an increase in the minimum wage.

Again, I would ask anyone on the other side, is there an action, is there a bill, is there a vote, is there a step we can take in the Senate this week or next week that would do the same to help 14 million children, to lift 2 million Americans out of poverty? I do not know of any. I will wait and see what their answer is. I hope they will answer that question because they should. This is a debate. They should answer that question. Tell us what you will do to help 14 million children if you are not going to support lifting or raising the minimum wage.

Less spending on food stamps: $4.6 billion per year. We hear attacks all the time—unjustified though they are—from the other side about SNAP. We used to call it the food stamp program. They are always saying: We need to reduce spending in that program. Well, instead of cutting people, as so many in this body seem to want to do every day of the week, voting for budgets that would slash support for people who need help just having a measure of food security, being able to feed their families, instead of doing that, why don't we support raising the minimum wage, lifting them out of poverty, lifting them out of the dependence they have to have on an important program such as SNAP? That is the better way to reduce those numbers. It is not just a question of what is right; it is a question of the best economic strategy for that worker, for his or her family, and for the economy overall.

Finally, veterans who would get a raise: 1 million veterans. We hear speeches all the time here in Washington from both sides of the aisle. In most cases—in almost every case—they are heartfelt and they are honest about the support that one Senator or a group of Senators provide to help our veterans. I have no doubt that people are sincere when they say that. But there are some opportunities around here where you can take action. You can cast a vote that has a direct benefit not just for 14 million children but in this case for 1 million veterans.

You have to ask yourself, if you cannot cast that vote, what are you going to do? What are you going to do with the power you have to cast your vote, to stand and say: I support an increase in the minimum wage. If you are not going to do that, if you are not going to vote for this or ever vote for this, then what are you going to do to help those same 1 million veterans or those same 14 million children or those 15.3 million women? If you have an answer for that, if you have a different strategy that will get us to these numbers, let's hear it. I would like to hear the answer to that. I have not heard it yet. Maybe I have not been listening. But I will try to listen closely to what the arguments are on the other side of the aisle.

So the hashtag #raisethewage is a good way to summarize why this is so fundamental but really so simple. This is about giving people a fair shot. It is not about some program people are asking to be created. It is about basic fairness in giving folks a fair shot in an economy that is still very tough for a lot of families.

I think it is critical that we emphasize some of these numbers, but it is also really about the human trauma so many families have been living through. So many of them have lived through the recession and are still climbing out of the hole they are in. They have lost their jobs; they may have run out of unemployment insurance; they may have lost their homes in the course of all of that. There is no question and it is irrefutable that the cascading effect of that trauma hits not only the worker and maybe, if they have a spouse or a partner, the person standing next to them, but it also has a cascading effect on the children as well and the family and then on all of us.

We all have a stake in this. The idea of raising the minimum wage is about some other group of people out there who are far away from us makes no sense. If we raise the minimum wage, the economy for everyone gets better. Folks don't have to take my word for it. Over 600 economists—600, not 6 or 10 but 600 economists—including 7 Nobel laureates, have signed a letter stating their support for raising the minimum wage to $10.10 because it would be good for workers and it would not have a negative effect on jobs and would even provide a boost to economic activity.

I am not going to read the whole January letter from the 600 economists, but I will read a statement from it and then I will conclude.

> At a time when persistent high unemployment is putting enormous downward pressure on wages, such a minimum-wage increase would provide a much-needed boost to the earnings of low-wage workers.
>
> In recent years there have been important developments in the academic literature on the effect of increases in the minimum wage on unemployment, with the weight of evidence now showing that increases in the minimum wage have had little or no—

Let me say it again, ''little or no''—

> negative effect on the unemployment of minimum-wage workers, even during times of weakness in the labor market. Research suggests that a minimum-wage increase could have a small stimulative effect on the economy as low-wage workers spend their additional earnings, raising demand and job growth, and providing some help on the jobs front.

That is a long statement by 600 economists. It is very measured. It is not inflating numbers and saying this is going to cure all of our economic challenges or all of our economic woes, but it is a clear and unequivocal endorsement of raising the minimum wage. I would add to that, with all due respect to those smart economists, the data on this chart.

Let me make one more point and then I will conclude. I don't have it in front of me, but one of the organizations that has endorsed the increase in the minimum wage is the American Academy of Pediatrics. Why? Because they know a lot about taking care of kids. They know a lot about providing the best health care for kids. They know a lot about the traumas and the difficulties that a lot of children face, especially if they are poor or if they are in a family getting low wages. That child is impacted. There is no doubt about that. All the science tells us that. All the literature tells us that. But if the American Academy of Pediatrics is saying we should raise the minimum wage because it is good for kids and these 600 economists are saying it is good for the economy and so much other information is saying it will help our veterans, 1 million veterans and 14 million kids, what is the argument on the other side against it?

I have heard some of the arguments, but I have not heard an argument yet that says they have a strategy on the other side of this debate that will help 15.3 million women, that will directly help 14 million children and that will help 1 million veterans and boost our economy on top of it. I would be for this even if there wasn't a boost to the economy because we could help people individually, but that is an added reason to be supportive of this bill.

This is long overdue. We shouldn't be having this debate every 5, 6 or 8 years. We should raise the minimum wage appropriately, to a reasonable number that makes sense, and then index it so we can take this issue off the table, so it would increase appropriately, as it should, over time.

If we had done that in the 1960s or 1970s, the minimum wage would be not just higher than it is today, $7.25, it would be more than $10.50 an hour, something higher than that.

If you are unalterably opposed to raising the minimum wage, I would hope you would have a strategy to make sure that 14 million kids are benefited by your action, by your bill—not over 20 years but by some other legislative vehicle—and you should have a strategy to make sure 1 million veterans have some measure of economic security they don't have, and you should be able to answer what the American Academy of Pediatrics said is good for children. If you can answer those kinds of questions, then I would love to take a look at your bill, but if you can't, you have some explaining to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. I thank my colleague for his words on the minimum wage. There were very important points raised in terms of that letter from those economists and the American Academy of Pediatrics. It adds wonderfully to the debate.

I rise to support, similar to my colleague from Pennsylvania, an increase in the Federal minimum wage. I am a proud cosponsor of the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, which would give 16.5 million Americans a much deserved raise.

I am incredibly proud of the important step Minnesota took to raise the minimum wage earlier this week. Just a few weeks ago or earlier this month the Governor and the Minnesota State legislature took this big step for workers and families. Because of this, hundreds of thousands of hard-working Minnesotans will themselves receive a raise.

This is a big deal. Before this increase, the Minnesota State minimum wage was actually lower than the Federal minimum wage.

I would like to talk a little bit about why Minnesota has taken this important step. Minnesotans believe that if someone works full time, 52 weeks a year, they should be able to put food on the table and a roof over their family's head. They believe that if someone works in America, they should have a chance to work their way up into the middle class. As I have traveled around Minnesota, I have heard from people all over the State who have been working long hours and yet still struggle to support their families, to work their way to the middle class and provide a brighter future for their children.

As a State, we recognized that there were too many people working very hard at one, two, and sometimes three jobs and were still struggling to get by. Parents have been wondering how they are going to be able to pay for their kids' college or even how to make the next car payment. Instead, they have been working 60-hour weeks and missing out on spending precious time with their children.

That is why I am proud that Minnesota has now joined 21 other States with minimum wages higher than the Federal minimum. In Washington, I am going to keep doing my part to help Minnesota workers.

Recent research confirms that what we see in Minnesota is happening across America. In a survey last year of workers earning less than $10 an hour, two-thirds of these workers said they are not meeting or are just meeting their basic living expenses. Two-thirds of these workers report needing public assistance. Two in five said they can't afford additional education and training. With wages too low, these workers are trapped. They are trapped in poverty.

The economy is getting better, but raising the minimum wage is about doing everything we can to make sure it gets better for everyone. Last year our Nation's largest businesses saw record profits. The market finished last year up over 26 percent, its best return since the 1990s. Raising the minimum wage is about making sure Minnesotans and workers across the country get to be a part of this improving economy.

That is why Minnesota has taken this important step. We know a strong minimum wage and a strong middle class go hand in hand. That is why I support raising the Federal minimum wage to a level that allows people to work their way to a better life.

For decades the Federal minimum wage has lost its value. If the Federal

minimum wage had kept pace with inflation since its peak value in the 1960s, today it would be worth over $10.50 an hour. Today the Federal minimum wage is just $7.25 an hour.

When families have had to pay more for food, rent, utilities, childcare, and education, the minimum wage not only hasn't kept up, it has gone down. It is not only minimum wage workers who haven't seen an increase in wages. Since the 1970s we have seen worker productivity grow by 135 percent while the average wages for middle-class workers have not changed. Americans are working harder than ever but average wages are stuck and the minimum wage actually has been declining.

Let me tell you about what raising the minimum wage would mean to one Minnesotan. Her name is Misrak. She is the mother of two and works at the airport as a cleaner, where she makes a low wage. Because she couldn't make ends meet, she had to take a second job assisting passengers in wheelchairs who need help. She has been doing this for 4 years, and during that time she has received only one raise worth just 80 cents an hour. She doesn't get vacation days or sick days or time off with her children. She wants to help her children finish college, and they want to finish college so they can be sure that if they work hard, that will be a path out of poverty and into the middle class. For Misrak, even though she works over 60 hours per week, she and her family are just barely scraping by.

Bringing the minimum wage back to a level that can support a family is the first step in restoring the promise that if someone works hard, they can build a better life for themselves and their family. Sometimes people ask why raise the minimum wage to $9.50 an hour as we did in Minnesota or $10.10 as we want to do. They say why not leave minimum wage workers alone to figure out things for themselves.

I don't believe raising the minimum wage is going to solve all the problems working families face. They need more than a minimum wage. They need good jobs, good schools, and good roads to provide a better future for themselves and for their children, but I support raising the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour because it is a wage that says Americans value work. It is a minimum guarantee that anyone who shows up 40 hours a week and ready to work should be able to provide food and shelter for themselves and their children and should not live in poverty.

Other people say we don't need to raise the minimum wage because it is not working families who earn the minimum wage. Instead they say it is mainly teenagers in their first job who earn the minimum wage. In fact, the vast majority of workers who would get a raise under this bill are working adults, including approximately 350,000 adults in Minnesota. One-quarter are parents, including over 85,000 parents in our State. Parents who would see a raise from the bill we are considering are the parents of 14 million children, an estimated 150,000 of them in Minnesota. These are kids. The American Academy of Pediatrics says do this. We know that kids who have deprivation have trauma. There are different kinds of deprivation, and we know it makes it harder for them to learn. It changes their brain chemistry to be under that much stress, so let's do it for these kids.

The majority—56 percent—of Minnesotans who would be affected by an increase are women. Nationwide, one in five working mothers would see a raise under this bill, and 6.8 million workers and their families would be lifted out of poverty.

Raising the minimum wage is good for working families and it is good for the economy. It boosts economic activity and helps local businesses. A study from the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago found that increasing the Federal minimum wage to $10 an hour could boost GDP by up to 0.3 percentage points. In a recent analysis of State employment data, Goldman Sachs noted that based on their analysis of States that increased their minimum wage at the start of 2014, the employment impact, if any, from a higher Federal minimum wage would be small relative to the normal volatility in the market. A higher minimum wage—

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for an additional 2 minutes or 1½ minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. FRANKEN. In that case, 2 minutes.

A higher minimum wage also helps our economy because increasing the minimum wage boosts the purchasing power of consumers and creates more customers for local businesses. People earning minimum wage spend the money they are earning. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that the increased economic activity from an increase to $10.10 could create 85,000 new jobs and boost GDP by $22.2 billion over the 3 years of implementation. Increasing the minimum wage helps businesses in another way too. Workers who are better paid are also more productive and less likely to quit. That means businesses save on recruiting and training costs. It also means they have better, more loyal, and harder working employees.

Businesses in Minnesota understand this. I spoke with Danny Schwartzman, the owner of Common Roots Cafe and Catering in Minneapolis. Danny pays his employees a minimum of $11 per hour, plus benefits, such as paid time off and health insurance. Danny has written:

> Over time, other businesses will see what I have seen—that paying people more yields more for the bottom line. It's easier to recruit and retain people. Happier employees are more likely to provide better customer service. Lower turnover means dramatically lower training costs and better employee performance.

Danny understands that his business will do better if his workers are doing better.

It is time that Congress follow Minnesota's example. The minimum wage is about making sure that work pays. It is about the American dream. If you work hard and take responsibility, you can put a roof over your head, provide a decent life for your children, and help them get ready for the future. It has been too long since the Federal minimum wage kept that promise to America's workers and their children, and that is why we need to raise it today.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I am proud to stand here today to support raising the minimum wage. No person in America should work full time and not earn enough to be above the poverty level. The poverty level in the United States in 2014 is about $23,000 for a family of four. Today, if someone works under the minimum wage for 40 hours a week they are still in poverty. No one should work 40 hours a week and be given a salary that does not lift them and their families out of poverty. That is absolutely wrong.

Millions of people in our country have been trying to climb into the middle class. But no matter how hard they work, they are stuck in the same place.

In America today, nearly half of those who grow up in families in the bottom fifth of income earners will stay there as adults. Tens of millions of Americans labor tirelessly for years to scale the economic ladder but they can never get off the ground. That is unacceptable, it is immoral, and that needs to change.

Raising the minimum wage is a first step to fighting income inequality in our country. We must help restore the dignity and the value of work and help millions of families escape poverty by increasing the national minimum wage.

Today, more than 46 million Americans are living in poverty. The average American household made less in 2012 than it did in 1989. That is wrong. It is plain wrong. Over these last 20 years, the top 1 percent of wage earners in America has seen their income skyrocket by 86 percent. In the years ahead it is going to get worse for those making the minimum wage. Over the next 5 years the real value of the minimum wage is projected to decline by 10 percent or over $1,400 of purchasing power for a full-time worker, unless we increase the minimum wage.

What does that mean? It means Americans will be able to buy less if we don't do it, and it will be harder for families to get by. The poor will effectively get even more impoverished. Even as they are working 40 hours a week, they get poorer and poorer and poorer because that minimum wage does not buy as much as it did the year

before and the year before and the year before. So the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. That is the system we have right now unless we take action to make sure those who earn the minimum wage are keeping pace with what it takes to buy the food, to pay the rent, to pay for the schools for the children in their family. If we don't do this, they get poorer and poorer while continuing to work 40 hours a week.

We know low-income Americans would benefit from raising the minimum wage, but they are not the only ones. Hundreds of small businesses in my home State of Massachusetts have signed on to a petition for a fair minimum wage of $10.50 per hour. That petition says that raising the minimum wage makes good business sense. That same small business petition says workers are also customers.

They are right. Increasing the purchasing power of minimum-wage workers helps stimulate the economy. Research has shown time and time again that minimum-wage workers spend the additional income they receive when the minimum wage is increased. If we increase the minimum wage to $10.10 per hour, 28 million workers would receive about $35 billion in additional wages.

Raising the minimum wage does not cause job losses, even during periods of recession. Most minimum-wage workers need the income to make ends meet and spend it quickly. It goes right into the economy. So economists believe it will actually boost the economy by creating about 85,000 new jobs and increasing economic activity by about $22 billion. That means everyone in our economy should be on board.

Raising the minimum wage is about giving families security, opportunity, and dignity—the security to know they can make ends meet, the opportunity to climb out of poverty and into the middle class, and the dignity to know they are getting paid a fair wage for a hard day's work. That is why I am proud to stand here today to urge my colleagues to increase the minimum wage so that we give America the raise it needs for those who are working so hard for our economy.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

MINIMUM WAGE FAIRNESS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The minority whip.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I think people listening to the debate on the minimum wage issue may be a little bit confused, because we all want to see hard-working American families work their way toward the American dream, but we are not going to be able to do that with the Federal Government setting wages for restaurants, small businesses, and other people across the country.

I have no objection, obviously, if Massachusetts or Minnesota or some other State wants to raise the minimum wage. That is their choice. But what my colleagues are now asking for is the Federal Government, or the Nation, to set a minimum wage at a level which will destroy between ½ and 1 million jobs. That is not just me talking, that is the Congressional Budget Office, which is the official scorecard for the Congress.

Think about this: You are a small business and your biggest expense is wages for the people who work there. Now the Federal Government comes in and says: Forget about your local conditions in North Dakota or in Texas. We are going to say, from Washington, DC, that everybody has to raise wages by 40 percent. I can't imagine there will be many businesses, small businesses in particular, that can absorb a 40-percent increase in their overhead.

This is going to hurt low-wage earners who are currently employed. That is what the Congressional Budget Office has said. And it is going to hurt the economy.

I heard the distinguished Senator from Minnesota say the economy is doing great. Well, I guess he must have missed the latest report on the first quarter of 2014. Because of the bad weather—we had an unseasonably cold first quarter—the economy grew at .1 percent. In other words, it almost went into what would be a negative growth or a recession. Of course, recession is defined as two quarters of negative growth, but my point is this strong growth he is talking about in the economy is a figment, it is not the fact, and we need to deal with the facts on the ground.

I wonder sometimes why public opinion holds Congress and Washington in such low esteem. Actually, I don't wonder why. My conclusion is they think we are out of touch. We are out of touch with regular American families—people who are working hard to make ends meet, getting the kids ready for school and living their version of the American dream. The latest statistic I saw says that 27 percent of the American people think we are on the right track. That is a shocking number. That means 73 percent think we are on the wrong track.

What is the old saying, that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome? Well, let's not do the same thing over and over again—keep America on the wrong track and engage in a policy decision here on this minimum wage, this 40-percent increase in the minimum wage, which will actually hurt more people than it helps.

This is not just my view. There was a poll that came out yesterday which said, basically, once people understood that people would be put out of work by increasing the minimum wage, 58 percent said it is not worth it. So 58 percent of the respondents said it is not worth it.

You know, it would be nice—it would be great—if we lived in a world where Washington could dictate what wages will be and all of a sudden peace, love, and happiness would break out—the age of Aquarius—because Washington is somehow distributing free money that didn't come from somewhere, that didn't come out of somebody's pocket or as part of someone's overhead or it didn't have any negative impact. But that is not the world we live in.

Again, this is not just public opinion, it is not just my opinion, it is not just the opinion of the Congressional Budget Office about the job-killing nature of this dramatic 40-percent increase proposed in the minimum wage. Back in 1998, President Clinton's economic adviser Gene Sperling—who just left the Obama administration—wrote a memo to President Clinton when a similar proposal was being made to raise the minimum wage 41 percent at that time. The Harkin bill we will vote on here shortly proposes to raise the minimum wage 40 percent. This was back in 1998 that Gene Sperling is writing to President Clinton on a proposed increase of the minimum wage by 41 percent, but for all practical purposes it is the same sort of proposal. This is what Mr. Sperling wrote to President Clinton:

> Your entire economic team believes that this approach is too aggressive and are concerned that Senator Kennedy's proposal could prove damaging to the employment prospects of low-skilled workers . . .

This was Senator Ted Kennedy's proposal back in 1998. Again, that is what the Congressional Budget Office has said about this bill. He goes on to say, ''as well as to the general macroeconomic performance of the economy.''

So what are our friends across the aisle proposing we do when the economy grew at .1 percent this last quarter? Well, administer a body blow to this anemic economic growth. And this is not just my opinion. It is deja vu all over again, as they say. I guess if you are around Washington long enough, you are going to see this movie replayed over and over.

The fact is that our economy is weaker today than it was in 1998. Sure, unemployment is coming down slowly, but the economy is growing too slowly and the number of people in the workforce is the lowest it has been for the last 30 years, the so-called labor participation rate.

So what did President Clinton do when his economic advisers said: Don't do it, Mr. President. While it is good politics, perhaps, it really will hurt the economy, and it will put people out of work.

President Clinton, to his credit, decided not to pursue that particular 41-percent increase in the minimum wage.

I mention that as a sad contrast with the current situation where President Obama, seeing his favorability ratings at the lowest they have been since he became President, is trying to change the subject and basically make a political point when the fact is that making the political point will actually hurt a lot of hard-working Americans.

So the majority leader has decided that rather than spend the week debating legislation that would actually create jobs, we should spend it debating a proposal that would destroy jobs.

We all know that a massive minimum wage increase such as this can be a job killer. So it really wasn't surprising when we saw that quantification by the Congressional Budget Office saying this proposal could destroy up to 1 million jobs. Yet, when I was listening here, I didn't hear the distinguished Senators from Massachusetts or from Minnesota talk at all about the Congressional Budget Office report. They want to ignore that. They want us to believe that this increase in the minimum wage would have little or no effect on employment and that maybe it would have a positive effect. I heard the Senator from Massachusetts make that claim, but the people who actually run America's businesses know better.

I had dinner the other night with some folks in the restaurant business, and I will mention some examples in a moment. Most of these folks I happened to have dinner with are pretty successful, but they started out washing dishes or bussing tables or waiting on tables. They started at the bottom and worked their way up because they could find a job, get their hand on the first rung of the economic ladder and then put the other hand on the next one and work their way up to where now they are very successful businesspeople. But they understand how businesses work. They understand the negative consequences of this bad policy coming from Washington, DC.

Just ask Robert Mayfield from Austin, TX, where I live. Mr. Mayfield has been in business for 35 years now, and he is pretty successful. He also knows a thing or two about the consequences of rising labor costs. This is what we are talking about. For a business, this is the overhead. This is the labor costs they have to pay out of their income.

Mr. Mayfield wants Members of Congress to know that he strongly opposes this proposal because it will cost people jobs. Here is how he describes it:

> What's most devastating about an increase in the minimum wage is that costs go up, and as a business owner, I have to raise prices—

So if we think we can pay somebody $10.10 an hour to work in a McDonalds and it won't have an impact on the cost of a Big Mac, well, we are living in a fantasy world. And that is what Mr. Mayfield says.

> I have to raise prices, and sometimes the market [won't bear it]. In the end, jobs will be lost and service will suffer . . . The people in Congress wanting to pass a minimum wage bill don't know any more about how a business works than a hog knows about Sunday School. What makes it worse is Obamacare hanging over our heads. It's a job killer.

I heard this again today from a friend of mine from San Antonio. Louis Barrios, whose family has run Mexican restaurants in San Antonio for many years, talked about the combination of ObamaCare and now this proposed minimum wage increase.

He said: Right now, we would like to pay a single mom who is working in our restaurants to take orders. If Congress lifts the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour, we will have no choice but to replace that server, that waitress, with an iPad.

That is what is happening in a lot of fast food restaurants these days.

Again, Congress shouldn't operate in a vacuum without knowledge or an awareness of what the consequences might be.

I am not suggesting that any of our friends who are advocating this minimum wage increase want to put that single mom out of work, but if we embrace that policy, that is what Louis Barrios told me this morning would likely happen. And people like Robert Mayfield and Louis Barrios are supported by countless economists.

So we have folks who are actually doing the work, and then we have the big thinkers like the economists who studied this issue and concluded that this size minimum wage increase is a really bad idea in terms of the economy. More than 500 of those economists, including several Nobel Laureates, recently signed an open letter to several policymakers expressing their opposition to this 40-percent minimum wage hike. Their letter said:

> Many of the businesses that pay their workers minimum wage operate on extremely tight profit margins, with any increase in the cost of labor threatening this delicate balance.

That is also what Robert Mayfield said: I can't absorb it without passing it along to customers, increasing the prices they have to pay or I may have to lay some people off or I may just have to close my business altogether.

They are operating on tight profit margins.

When so many economists and so many folks who are working across America are telling us the same thing—and the truth is that it makes perfect common sense—it would be the height of arrogance for us to ignore their concerns. But that is what President Obama and Majority Leader REID are asking us to do today.

I made this point at the beginning. I fully share our colleagues' concerns about the stagnant wages being earned by American workers all across America. Indeed, since the Obama economic recovery—that was after the recession of 2008, but after the Obama economic recovery started kicking in in June 2009, the median household income in this country has gone down by $1,800. So I understand the concern, but I find it a little depressing that Congress's only answer is to raise the minimum wage by 40 percent, which will put people out of work and shut down small businesses, when there are a lot better ways for us to address it, and I will talk about that in a moment. Raising the minimum wage by 40 percent will not grow the economy and it will not create jobs. It will do the opposite.

Of course, the truth is—and we read this in newspapers a couple of weeks ago—we all know what is happening here, so let's talk about the 800-pound gorilla here in the Senate Chamber. The truth is that the President and Majority Leader REID don't expect this bill to pass because they actually are very intelligent people and they know the facts as I have just described them here on the floor of the Senate. This is all about politics. This is about trying to make this side of the aisle look bad and hard-hearted to try to rescue this midterm election coming up in November. They see the President's approval rating going down, they see a number of midterm races for the Senate in play, and they have to do something. They are desperate. ObamaCare didn't work out the way they thought it would. You can't keep what you have if you like it. Your premiums didn't go down $2,500 if you are an average family of four. And, no, you can't keep your doctor in too many cases under the health insurance exchanges. So they are desperate.

We know from reporting in the New York Times and elsewhere that this minimum wage bill—this show vote we are going to have here shortly—is part of a larger messaging package created in collaboration with the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. That is not me talking; that is the admission by the leadership on the other side of the aisle. This is not about actually solving the problem; this is about political theater, courtesy of Majority Leader REID.

The real tragedy is that millions of Americans don't have any time or any patience for this sort of political theater and partisan gamesmanship because the numbers are very troubling. The Obama recovery is 5 years old. Yet 10.5 million people are still unemployed—including 3.7 million people who have been unemployed for more than 6 months—with an additional 7.4 million people working part-time because they can't find full-time work or, because of ObamaCare, their employers have taken them off full-time work and put them on part-time work in order to avoid the employer penalties.

It is true that the hard-working American family needs some help, but the truth is that this remedy being offered today—this medicine—to try to supposedly solve the problem will just make things worse. So I have a proposition to make to our friends across the aisle. If they would work with us, if they would leave these games by the

wayside, and if they would focus for a minute on trying to work with us to engage in solutions that would help grow the economy and help reduce unemployment and help raise wages across the Nation, then we would gladly embrace that, and we have introduced a number of bills that would do exactly that.

I know the distinguished Senator who is presiding comes from an energy-producing State like mine, and this is no mystery to her, but in Texas, like North Dakota, there are a lot of really good jobs, but people don't have the skills necessary to qualify for those good jobs.

I was in Fredericksburg, TX, recently, where they are training welders at the community college. A welder can make $100,000 or more a year. In the Permian Basin in Midland and Odessa, TX, truckdrivers can make $100,000 a year. It is unbelievable what this renaissance in American energy has done to our economy and job creation.

One thing we could do that would be a heck of a lot more constructive than this kind of show vote and partisan gamesmanship would be to improve our workforce training programs, the Pell grant program, and try to find ways to get people the training they need in order to qualify for these good, high-paying jobs being created by this wonderful renaissance in American energy.

We could do some other things. We could try to rein in some of the regulations that I hear about day in and day out from my constituents are constraining businesses. We could approve the Keystone XL Pipeline, which makes a lot of sense and would create about 42,000 jobs. It would give us a safe source of energy from a friendly country such as Canada. We could do something else constructive. We could provide some relief for those people who have had full-time jobs turned into part-time jobs because of ObamaCare. Senator COLLINS from Maine and Senator SCOTT from South Carolina have a bill that would do exactly that.

Unfortunately, while I am an optimistic person, I am not particularly optimistic about the majority leader and the President changing their tactics in this election year. So that is why, tragically, under these circumstances we find ourselves here today debating a jobs bill that will actually kill jobs rather than one that would create jobs. What a terrible lost opportunity that is.

I see my friend from Maryland is here ready to speak.

I ask unanimous consent that several letters that have been provided to us by organizations such as the American Hotel & Lodging Association, the Wholesale Marketers Association, among other business organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my comments. All of these letters are opposing this 40-percent minimum wage increase.

I would finally ask unanimous consent to make as part of the record a column written by a gentleman by the name of Michael Saltsman in the IndyStar newspaper entitled ''Wage hike cost is no myth.'' This is the source for the information we got about the Clinton archives and this memo that Gene Sperling wrote to President Clinton advising him that even though it might be good temporary politics, it would actually hurt a lot of low-wage workers. I ask unanimous consent that they be made part of the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Indy Star, Apr. 26, 2014]

WAGE HIKE COST IS NO MYTH

(By Michael Saltsman)

President Obama and Democrats in Congress have made a 40 percent increase in the minimum wage their signature election-year initiative. Supporters of the policy have dismissed concerns that the policy will hurt jobs as a ''myth'' (Indiana University's Fran Quigley made the claim in his April 15 column). But the ''myth'' argument has become increasingly difficult to defend. Not only has the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office validated opponents' worst fears about a higher minimum wage and job loss, but the release of new papers from President Clinton's archives shows that his own economic team had misgivings about a 40 percent wage hike.

In 1998, the U.S. economy was relatively strong: Business was booming, unemployment was at 4.6 percent, and just under 14 percent of teens were unemployed. (That's a relatively low figure for this demographic group.) The late Democratic Sen. Ted Kennedy had proposed a 40 percent increase in the federal minimum wage, from $5.15 an hour to $7.25.

But in a memo to President Clinton, chief economic adviser Gene Sperling warned against supporting the senator's plans: ''Your entire economic team believes that this [40 percent increase] approach is too aggressive . . . and could prove damaging to the employment prospects of low-skilled workers.'' Clinton took his team's advice. Flash forward 16 years: The U.S. economy today is dramatically weaker than it was in the late 1990s. Unemployment stands at 6.8 percent, and the unemployment rate for young adults is 20.6 percent. (The jobless rate for this young age group has been above 20 percent for 66 months, a historical record.) If President Clinton's economic team was concerned about enacting a 40 percent wage hike in 1998, they'd be scared to death of doing it now.

And with good reason: The CBO analyzed the minimum wage proposal on the table, and estimated that as many as 1 million jobs would be lost if it was passed. A recent national survey of affected employers indicates that nearly 40 percent would be forced to cut staff to adapt to the higher labor costs. Even the Obama White House, in private conversations in 2013, was uneasy with a dramatic wage increase in this environment: According to the Washington Post, the president's team ''rejected a figure so high, worried that it could destroy jobs.''

What explains this year's lapse of economic judgment, then? One explanation, supported by reporting in The New York Times, is that the push for $10.10 is an election-year ploy to boost enthusiasm among the party's base. It's also a useful tactic to change the conversation away from the deeply unpopular health-care law—even if it comes with collateral damage for the least skilled in America. We won't know for certain if President Obama endorsed this cynical strategy until his own records and papers are released—perhaps 10 or 15 years from now. What we can say for certain today is that supporters of a higher minimum wage are flat-out wrong when they dismiss the employment consequences of a 40 percent hike. If claiming that a minimum wage hike will harm jobs truly is a ''right-wing myth,'' it's the only such myth that both the Obama and Clinton White Houses believed in.

APRIL 28, 2014.

DEAR SENATOR: The undersigned associations, representing a broad cross section of the U.S. economy, urge you to reject current proposals to raise the Federal minimum wage. One such proposal is S. 2223, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, which will increase the minimum wage to $10.10 per hour for non-tipped employees and tie future minimum wage increases to inflation.

For many businesses, this 39 percent increase could truly be the difference between continuing to operate and going out of business. For the employees it attempts to help, it may be the difference between a job and unemployment.

As the Congressional Budget Office recently confirmed, raising the minimum wage will be detrimental to job creation and low-skilled workers trying to get started on the economic ladder. Traditional economic theory and modeling holds that the more expensive something is, the less of it one can afford. This is exactly what will happen if the minimum wage is increased—there will be fewer low-skilled workers hired, other workers will lose hours, and employers will have more incentive to find other ways to be productive, such as using technology or automation where they would previously have hired someone. When Congress' own economists say increasing the minimum wage will reduce employment, Congress should listen.

Any discussion about raising the minimum wage needs to recognize that many businesses run under very slim operating margins and will have the hardest time absorbing these higher labor costs. They will have to find more revenues or trim costs to make up the difference. Furthermore, indexing the minimum wage to inflation means that employers will likely be faced with automatically increasing labor costs without an automatic increase in revenues or profits.

Further, while the legislative package may contain benefits intended to help small businesses, these are insufficient to mitigate the negative impact the wage increase will surely have on businesses.

We respectfully ask that you oppose S. 1737 and other similar proposals to raise the minimum wage. The best way to help low-skilled and low-income workers is to favor more comprehensive, pro-growth solutions to our nation's most pressing economic issues.

Sincerely,

American Hotel and Lodging Association, American Wholesale Marketers Association, Asian American Hotel Owners Association, Association of Kentucky Fried Chicken Franchisees, International Franchise Association, International Warehouse Logistics Association, National Association of Manufacturers, National Association of Theatre Owners, National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors, National Council of Chain Restaurants, National Federation of Independent Business, National Franchisee Association, National Grocers Association, National Office Products Alliance, National Restaurant Association, National Retail Federation, NATSO, representing America's

Travel Plazas and Truckstops, Petroleum Marketers Association of America, Professional Landcare Network, Society of American Florists, U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

AMERICAN FARM BUREAU FEDERATION,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

Re: American Farm Bureau Federation Opposition of S. 2223

U.S. SENATE,
Washington DC.

DEAR SENATOR: For agricultural producers across America, remaining economically competitive on fruits, vegetables and other commodities that are labor intensive is a continual struggle. Particularly over the last few decades, the American market has seen tremendous increases in the importation of foreign-grown produce, especially from nations where labor costs are substantially lower than those in the United States. Nevertheless, hired labor (including contract labor) remains an important input to U.S. agricultural production, accounting for about 17 percent of variable production expenses and about 40 percent of such expenses for fruits, vegetables, and nursery products.

As the Congressional Budget Office recently confirmed, raising the minimum wage will be detrimental to job creation and low-skilled workers trying to get started on the economic ladder. As the minimum wage is increased, workers risk losing hours and employers will have more incentive to invest in technology rather than hiring the low-skilled worker. Additionally, in the agricultural sector, where margins are historically slim, any proposal that escalates labor costs can put growers in a precarious position. S. 2223, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, proposes to increase the federal minimum wage by nearly 40 percent, making it even more difficult for growers to remain competitive. Growers will have to find more revenues or trim costs to make up the difference. The increased pressure from higher labor costs would only make it harder for farmers, particularly small- and medium-sized growers, to compete or even stay in business.

S. 2223 threatens the economic well-being of many agricultural producers in labor-intensive crops. Farm Bureau urges you to vote ''no'' on this bill when it is taken up on the Senate floor.

Sincerely,

BOB STALLMAN,
President.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE: The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, urges you to vote against S. 2223, the ''Minimum Wage Fairness Act,'' which would ultimately increase the federal minimum wage by $2.85 per hour, and index it to inflation.

The proposed increase—almost 40 %—would cause small business employers who have very tight operating margins and are least able to absorb higher costs to eliminate entry-level jobs, reduce hours and benefits for current employees, and possibly dismiss current employees. Furthermore, indexing the minimum wage to inflation means labor costs would continue to increase even though employer revenues and profits may not.

Many economists, including those used by Congress, have concluded that raising the minimum wage would be detrimental to job creation and low-skilled workers trying to get started on the economic ladder. The Congressional Budget Office recently determined that as many as 500,000 jobs could be lost by late 2016 if this increase is passed. This determination was later endorsed by Chairman of the Federal Reserve Janet Yellen—if the minimum wage is increased there would be fewer low skilled workers hired, other workers would lose hours, and employers would have more incentive to replace employees with technology or automation.

The economics columnist Robert Samuelson summed it up well: ''Many studies find negative job effects. The CBO didn't make them up. Hiking the minimum wage is more compelling as politics than as social policy . . . weak labor markets still reflect the Great Recession's hangover.''

Additionally, the temporary tax breaks included in this bill to soften the impact would not offset the harm of the additional labor costs. The push for this increase in the minimum wage comes against the backdrop of employers struggling to recover from the recession and to figure out the impact of Obamacare on their operations. The last thing they need is for the cost of their labor to go up as well.

Increasing the minimum wage would be a further drag on the economy and Chamber members trying to be part of the recovery, both big and small. The Chamber strongly opposes S. 2223, the ''Minimum Wage Fairness Act.'' The Chamber may consider including votes on, or in relation to, S. 2223—including votes on the motion to proceed—in our annual How They Voted scorecard.

Sincerely,

R. BRUCE JOSTEN,
Executive Vice President,
Government Affairs.

INTERNATIONAL FOODSERVICE DISTRIBUTORS ASSOCIATION,
McLean, VA, April 29, 2014.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the International Foodservice Distributors Association, I am writing to urge you to oppose legislation to raise the minimum wage. As our economy continues to struggle amid uncertainty around issues such as healthcare, now is not the time for government to impose additional new costs on American businesses.

IFDA is the non-profit trade association that represents businesses in the foodservice distribution industry throughout the United States and internationally. IFDA members include broadline, systems, and specialty foodservice distributors that supply food and related products to professional kitchens from restaurants, colleges and universities, to hospitals and care facilities, hotels and resorts, and other foodservice operations. Our members operate more than 800 distribution facilities with more than $125 billion in annual sales.

Increasing the minimum wage at this time makes little sense, especially with our foodservice operator customers continuing to face tremendous headwinds from a wide variety of factors. As employers struggle to create jobs, the nation's job participation rate remains at historically low levels. This has resulted in severe reductions in consumer's disposable income, a critical element in the growth of food away from home.

Other challenges have come from additional government requirements. The employer mandate in the Affordable Care Act will result in dramatic cost increases as operators must provide healthcare for their employees or move their workforce away from full time employment. The continued diversion of corn to the fuel supply created by the Renewable Fuel Standard has increased costs by as much as $18,000 per year to individual restaurant operators.

Increasing the minimum wage now will do nothing to solve what continues to be the most critical issue facing our nation today, the stagnant economy and continuing high unemployment rate. I strongly urge you to oppose any effort to increase the minimum wage.

With best wishes,

JONATHAN EISEN,
Senior Vice President,
Government Relations.

INTERNATIONAL FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the nation's 825,000 franchise small businesses and the nearly 18 million workers they support, I write today to urge you to vote against legislation to raise the federal minimum wage. One such proposal is S. 2223, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, which will increase the minimum wage to $10.10 per hour and tie future minimum wage increases to inflation. For the many franchise businesses that are labor-intensive and already operate on thin profit margins, this legislation could be the difference between continuing to operate and going out of business—between maintaining employees or shedding more jobs.

Businesses should be able to determine the most competitive starting wage and subsequent raises for their employees within their industry and local economy. A drastic minimum wage increase would ripple throughout the fragile American economy and undermine employer's desires to reward hard work with wage increases. This effect will be even more pronounced when combined with the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act's employer mandate. According to the Congressional Budget Office, raising the minimum wage will be detrimental to job creation and low-skilled workers trying to get started on the economic ladder. When Congress' own economists say increasing the minimum wage will reduce employment, Congress should listen.

Although this legislation contains other benefits for small businesses that the International Franchise Association (IFA) fully supports, they are insufficient to mitigate the negative impact of a drastic increase in the minimum wage. On their own, tax incentives for purchasing or hiring are a significant boon for franchise business owners, and they should be considered along with other business tax extenders that will help the nation's small businesses grow and thrive. Including important pro-growth initiatives as a sweetener for the bitter pill of an artificial wage floor that disrupts the labor market is the type of public policy that holds our nation's franchise owners back from fully contributing to the nation's economic recovery.

I urge you to vote ''NO'' on this measure. The IFA will consider all votes on, or in relation to, this issue among our annual list of ''Key Votes.''

Sincerely,

STEPHEN J. CALDEIRA,
President & Chief Executive Officer,
International Franchise Association.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHAIN RESTAURANTS,
Washington, DC, April 28, 2014.

Hon. LAMAR ALEXANDER,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR ALEXANDER: The U.S. Senate is expected to consider S. 2223, legislation seeking to increase the federal minimum wage from its current level of $7.25 an hour to $10.10 an hour, an increase of 40 percent. On behalf of the National Council of Chain Restaurants, I am writing to express our strong opposition to this ill-timed and flawed proposal.

At this key juncture in the country's economic recovery, the last thing that the Senate should be considering is a scheme to raise labor costs on many local businesses across the United States. As you may know, the vast majority of workers earning the minimum wage are teens living with their parents, adults living alone, or second household earners. Moreover, as minimum wage workers gain important skills, they receive significant raises. As such, the legislation before the Senate fails to recognize that the federal minimum wage is a starting wage, and that most employees don't stay on this starting wage for very long.

In addition, S. 2223 would increase the cash wage for tipped employees by almost 240 percent. This provision is included even though current law already requires employers to pay eligible employees the statutory wage rate in the uncommon instance that tipped income doesn't reach the starting wage rate (on a national level, the median hourly wage for tipped employees is $16–$22/hour). Finally, the proposal links future wage hikes to the consumer price index, injecting an unnecessary degree of uncertainty and volatility into labor cost calculations for chain restaurant businesses.

Chain restaurants are employers of opportunity in local communities around the country, whether it is a first job for individuals with limited work skills to long-term careers in a fast-paced, competitive and innovative industry. Rather than considering legislation which raises the cost of staying in business for labor-intensive small establishments while limiting needed job opportunities, the Senate should advance policies proven to foster broad-based economic growth and to address the historically low labor participation rate and the nation's persistently high unemployment rate (including a teen unemployment rate of over 20 percent).

We urge you to oppose S. 2223, or related legislation, when it is considered by the U.S. Senate.

Sincerely,

ROBERT J. GREEN,
Executive Director.

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the nation's leading small business advocacy organization, I am writing in strong opposition to S. 2223, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act, a bill to increase the minimum wage to $10.10 and permanently index it to inflation. NFIB opposes any effort to increase the federal minimum wage, and a vote on S. 2223 will be considered an NFIB KEY VOTE for the 113th Congress.

Like most government mandates on business, raising the minimum wage will have a deep and disproportionate impact on the small-business sector because small businesses are the least able to absorb such a dramatic increase in their labor costs. The small-business sector has historically created two-thirds of net new private jobs in the U.S. economy, but has failed to recover in recent years because of a series of policies that increase the burden on small-business owners—increases to healthcare costs, higher taxes, more costly regulations, and now the minimum wage increase proposal.

The minimum wage directly affects small businesses because a large amount of their earnings go directly to pay for operating expenses, such as equipment, supplies, property costs, inventory and employee wages and benefits. Increasing labor costs does not incentivize growth or hiring—they make it nearly impossible. Permanently indexing the minimum wage, like S. 2223 proposes, would ensure that it would rise every year, further adding to the burden placed on employers and placing them at a competitive disadvantage. S. 2223 also increases the minimum cash wage for tipped employees until it reaches 70 percent of the federal minimum wage. Raising the cost of labor creates incentives for employers to find ways to use less labor.

The latest Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report supports NFIB's Research Foundation findings: significant job loss as a result of increasing the minimum wage. NFIB's Research Foundation analyzed the potential economic impact of raising the California, Illinois, New Jersey and New York minimum wages, and the results were telling. An increase of California's minimum wage to $9.25 per hour would cost the state 68,000 jobs—63 percent of which are in the small business sector—and a $5.7 billion reduction in real economic output. Illinois would lose 21,000 jobs (67 percent in small businesses) and $4.5 billion in economic output from an increase to $10.65 per hour. A New Jersey proposal to increase the minimum wage to $8.25 would cut 31,000 jobs from the state (59 percent in small businesses) and $17.4 billion in lost economic output. The New York study concluded a loss of 68,000 jobs (more than 70 percent in small businesses) and $2.5 billion in lost economic output.

The job killing effects of this minimum wage hike are obvious. Small business cannot afford another economically devastating mandate from the federal government. NFIB urges you to vote NO on S. 2223 and will consider it an NFIB KEY VOTE for the 113th Congress.

Sincerely,

SUSAN ECKERLY,
Senior Vice President, Public Policy.

NATIONAL GROCERS ASSOCIATION,
April 28, 2014.

Hon. SENATOR HARRY REID,
Senate Majority Leader, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL,
Senate Republican Leader, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR REID AND SENATOR MCCONNELL: The National Grocers Association (NGA) strongly urges a NO VOTE on the Minimum Wage Fairness Act (S. 2223) as it comes to the floor for a vote. NGA Independent retail and wholesale grocers have a significant economic impact across nearly every community in America. Our industry is accountable for close to 1 percent of the nation's overall economy and is responsible for generating $131 billion in sales, 944,000 jobs, $30 billion in wages, and $27 billion in tax revenue. We are proud that the communities we serve are also the neighborhoods we live in.

The Minimum Wage Fairness Act, if enacted would increase the federal minimum wage to $10.10 per hour over a 2 year period and tie future minimum wage increases to inflation. While the independent grocery industry welcomes any focus on the improving economy and creating jobs, a minimum wage increase during a time when our economy continues to recover runs counter to that goal. A recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) supports this claim noting that increasing the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour could reduce total employment by 500,000 workers by the second half of 2016.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2012, cashiers in the grocery industry made an hourly mean wage of $10.24, nearly 2 dollars more than the current federal minimum wage and higher than any of the other retail industries including department stores, convenience stores, and restaurants. Grocers are proud of the jobs that we provide and the wide array of career opportunities we offer to our employees. We are often the first job for many teens and offer diverse opportunities for employees of many skill sets, some of which have age restrictions such as meat cutters, bailers, and fork lift operators who must be at least 18 years of age.

Because this is a critical issue to our member companies, NGA will be key voting the Minimum Wage Fairness Act (S. 2223) and including it on our 2014 Legislative Scorecard. Thank you for your consideration. Independent grocers look forward to your support on this very important issue by VOTING NO on S. 2223.

Sincerely,

PETER J. LARKIN,
President and CEO.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATORS: The National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the largest manufacturing association in the United States, representing manufacturers in every industrial sector and in all 50 states, urges you to oppose the Motion to Proceed to S. 2223, the Minimum Wage Fairness Act introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D–IA).

The NAM supports labor policies promoting job creation and manufacturers are committed to compensating employees at a competitive wage for their work. High levels of job performance and employee satisfaction are encouraged by relating compensation that is both internally equitable and externally competitive to performance on the job.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently reported raising the minimum wage from $7.25 to $10.10 an hour will be detrimental to job creation. In fact, CBO estimates that an increase in the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour could result in a loss of employment of 500,000 by the second half of 2016.

The NAM's Key Vote Advisory Committee has indicated that votes on S. 2223, including procedural motions such as a Motion to Proceed, may be considered for designation as Key Manufacturing Votes in the 113th Congress. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

ARIC NEWHOUSE,
Senior Vice President, Policy and Government Relations.

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, April 28, 2014.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the nation's restaurant and foodservice industry, we urge you to oppose the Minimum Wage Fairness Act (S. 2223). The National Restaurant Association may consider any votes on, or related to, this legislation in our annual ''How They Voted'' legislative scorecard.

The Minimum Wage Fairness Act, would increase the federal minimum wage to $10.10 an hour and raise the minimum cash wage for tipped employees to 70 percent of the minimum wage for non-tipped employees. This represents a nearly 40 percent increase in the current federal wage, and a tripling of the cash wage for employees who receive tips.

With over 13.5 million employees, the restaurant and foodservice industry is the second-largest private employer in the United States. As average pre-tax profit margins in the restaurant industry range from 4 to 6 percent, restaurateurs have little ability to absorb or offset higher labor costs, especially

at this time of economic and operational uncertainty. Roughly 90 percent of the industry consists of small business owners, with only 1 out of 10 restaurants in the U.S. owned and operated by chain corporations.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) officially concluded that raising the federal minimum wage to $10.10 would result in 500,000 job losses. Moreover, that's a conservative estimate, as CBO recognized in its analysis that the job losses could be as high as 1 million.

As the continued fiscal battles at the federal level have negatively affected consumer confidence, the unknown factors associated with potentially significant cost increases from implementation of the 2010 health care law have created an increasingly difficult business environment for Main Street businesses. While we understand the legislation is intended to help low-income families, U.S. Census data reveals that the average household income of restaurant employees who earn the federal minimum wage is $62,507. Moreover, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 71 percent of minimum wage restaurant workers are individuals under the age of 25, most of whom work part-time. These are critical positions for bringing people into the labor force.

Mandating such a dramatic increase in the starting wage at this time, when many businesses are already struggling in a difficult economic climate, will limit employment opportunities and slow economic growth in a sector of the economy that is undergoing a tremendous amount of change. We welcome a discussion about wages and economic factors, but we ask you to oppose this proposed wage increase and similar proposals and work with the small business community on a plan to strengthen the economy and create some sense of certainty going forward.

Sincerely,

SCOTT DEFIFE,
Executive Vice President,
Policy and Government Affairs.

NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Republican Leader,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPUBLICAN LEADER MCCONNELL: On behalf of the National Retail Federation (NRF) and the nation's retail industry, I am writing to urge you to oppose the proposed forty percent increase in the federal minimum wage that the Senate plans to consider this week. Our nation's economy is continuing to struggle to create jobs, and this legislation will likely make it worse, particularly among younger workers. Please note that we will consider votes on this measure among the Key Retail Votes for our annual voting scorecard.

NRF is the world's largest retail trade association, representing discount and department stores, home goods and specialty stores, Main Street merchants, grocers, wholesalers, chain restaurants and Internet retailers from the United States and more than 45 countries. Retail is the nation's largest private sector employer, supporting one in four U.S. jobs—42 million working Americans. Contributing $2.5 trillion to annual GDP, retail is a daily barometer for the nation's economy. NRF's This is Retail campaign highlights the industry's opportunities for life-long careers, how retailers strengthen communities, and the critical role that retail plays in driving innovation.

Raising the standard of living for low-skill, low-wage workers is a valid goal, but there is clear evidence that mandated wage hikes undermine the job prospects for less skilled and part-time workers. Policymakers have other tools, such as increasing the earned income tax credit, fixing the tax code, education improvements, immigration reform, transportation funding, and strong trade alliances that will aid in achieving that goal without creating more unemployment. Finding more opportunities for those trying to start out is a better economic approach than restricting the amount of jobs for those seeking employment.

What we should be doing is talking about how we improve people's chances to move up. The minimum wage was designed to have young people get into the marketplace to get started. With a workforce of 155 million, a approximately 2 million are on minimum wage. To talk about raising the entry, or starting, wage is to admit we have failed on education and training.

Slow job growth is the most pressing issue facing the U.S. economy and our focus should be on the creation of jobs and increasing opportunities for the under-employed. For many businesses, particularly smaller employers, uncertainty is the dominant mood. Higher labor costs also loom in the future with the pending implementation of the Affordable Care Act. All of these factors suggest that now is the least opportune moment to engage in what is essentially an opportunity tax by raising the minimum wage.

Employers respond to higher labor costs by hiring fewer workers. A higher minimum wage eliminates entry-level positions that provide unskilled employees the opportunity to gain experience. Less experience makes it harder for workers to become more productive and earn higher wages. There is a domino effect: such an increase creates wage inflation by putting upward pressure on existing wages of those making more than the minimum. It would limit job growth and stunt that group of workers ability to advance. There would be a contraction of jobs instead of an increase in positions available. Lost jobs as a consequence of a higher minimum wage will inevitably make it harder for these individuals to learn new job skills than can create a path to a brighter future.

The retail sector has been a leading job creator throughout the recession and the recovery. For many Americans, the retail industry provides the chance to learn new job skills, to earn a living, to find a career, or to earn some extra money. Retail offers a wide range of career opportunities, the vast majority of which are above minimum wage, and supports one out of four U.S. jobs.

NRF encourages Congress to forgo soundbite politics and instead focus on economic policies that find ways of putting people to work. This is not the time for yet another anti-job mandate for those employees that are looking for jobs and those companies who want to help grow the economy.

NRF looks forward to working with Congress as you seek to increase economic growth in this country.

Sincerely,

DAVID FRENCH,
Senior Vice President,
Government Relations.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Thank you, Madam President.

I have been on the floor several times, and many of my colleagues, particularly on this side of the aisle, have been here to talk about a growing trend in America; that we see a concentration of wealth and a shrinking middle class. If you are a business owner, you should be very concerned about that. The growing middle class is what buys the products that go to the restaurants that keep our economy going. Time and time again we have asked to proceed on legislation that would allow us to help the growing middle class. This is not our first effort with the minimum wage. Many States have passed increases in the minimum wage. It is time for our Federal Government to do the same, to help a growing middle class.

The last effort was on behalf of gender equity, paycheck fairness, where we sought to have a fair shot for women in the workplace, so they don't have to work extra time to make the same income as a man for equal work. A woman receives on average about 77 percent of what a man does in the same job. So we tried to move forward with a fair shot for women with paycheck fairness. But, no, the Republicans said, no, we are not even going to consider it. We are not even going to take that up.

We are hearing some of the same arguments now in regard to proceeding on the debate on the minimum wage. My friend from Texas talked about the Affordable Care Act. We are proud the Affordable Care Act gives a fair shot for all Americans to have access to quality, affordable health care. Millions of Americans today have quality health insurance coverage they didn't have before the passage of the Affordable Care Act. It is working. We now know that insurance companies cannot discriminate against women or anyone based upon preexisting conditions. Those days are over. There is now a fair shot for health care access—access for all Americans. We know small business owners now can get competitive plans and they can choose among a lot of different types of plans, a fair shot for small business owners to be treated equally with larger companies in regard to the insurance marketplace. We have done that.

We have expanded Medicaid to close that coverage gap known as the doughnut hole for prescription drug coverage, and there are no longer any copayments on preventive health care. We extended Medicare because we want a fair shot for our seniors for their security, and that is why our caucus defends the Social Security system, knowing how important it is for our seniors. Yes, we do fight for our children. A fair shot for our children means we support Head Start and we support help for higher education because we know that is the ticket to economic growth.

In a few moments—in a few moments—we will have a chance for a fair shot for working families in this country by moving to consider the minimum wage law. We haven't adjusted the minimum wage law for a long time. I heard my friend from Texas talk about job issues. Every time we have increased the minimum wage our economy has grown, and there is a reason for that. This legislation will put $34 billion into the economy, will help

grow the economy, and will lift 2 million Americans out of poverty.

Think about this. If someone works 40 hours a week and they receive the minimum wage, there is not a State in this country where they can get affordable housing. People cannot support their family on the minimum wage in the United States of America. By passing the Minimum Wage Act, we give 28 million Americans a raise. This is a fair shot for all workers in this country.

Let me dispel some of the rumors that are out there. The average age of a person on minimum wage is 35 years old. We are not talking about college students. We are talking about people trying to support a family on the minimum wage, and they cannot do it. Many have children. The majority are women. It is time we answer this inequity in our system. We haven't had an increase in the minimum wage—in fact, if we look at what it was in 1968, this increase will basically get us back to where we were in 1968. It will help our economy.

We have heard these projections before; that every time we do this it will kill jobs. It doesn't do that. Look at the history. Look at what has happened with the previous increases in the minimum wage: Our economy has gotten stronger. It has grown stronger.

So it is time to give a raise to American workers. It is time to help a growing middle class. It is time we give a fair shot to working families in America. I urge my colleagues to vote to proceed on this debate. Don't continue a filibuster. Let's give America a fair shot, and I urge my colleagues to support the motion to proceed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Thank you, Madam President.

I rise to offer rebuttal to the claims my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are making about their proposals to enact an unprecedented increase in the Federal minimum wage. I come at this issue as a former small business owner and an employee who once worked for the minimum wage. I started as a stock boy. Another time I was a window washer. I learned some important things while I was doing that: I learned work ethic, I learned to show up on time, I learned to do the job well, and learned other skills so I could advance. Eventually I got the schooling, skills and the work ethic to own my own business.

My colleagues gloss over the fact that minimum wage is for entry-level employees. Unskilled workers, young people, and those new to the workforce are those who typically earn the minimum wage because it is their first job or opportunity to gain career skills. This is evidenced by the fact that a majority of minimum wage earners are between the ages of 16 and 24. These are the jobs where the workers learn to be dependable, how to work with other employees, and how to obtain that work ethic. A lot of them don't know how to run a cash register. They don't know how to make change. They don't know how to greet a customer. They don't know how to interrupt their texting in order to wait on the customer. This is why two-thirds of the employees who start at the minimum wage are earning more than the minimum wage within 1 year. They learn how to do those things. They pick up skills.

Somebody was talking to me about how people who are getting the minimum wage are in dead-end jobs such as fast food. I happened to be standing next to a guy who was working at Burger King. He said: Wait a minute. I started 6 months ago. I started at minimum wage. I learned the job. I am dependable. I show up. I know what the other work is. I am a supervisor now. In 6 months, I am a supervisor. I am making a lot more than the minimum wage, and in another year I might have my own store.

That might have some validity because I have a friend in Cheyenne who owns a McDonald's, and he points out to me the other people in Wyoming who now own a McDonald's who used to work for him who all started at a minimum wage. You have to start somewhere.

A lot of people think when they graduate from college they are supposed to move into an executive position. Chances are they will get a job and they will start at the bottom of the company. If they do their work well, learn the skills and become dependable, they will work their way up and they will make more money.

Even more troubling are the claims my colleagues are making to justify this particular increase. Increasing the Federal minimum wage by nearly 40 percent represents an arbitrary and unprecedented increase which is largely unsupported by economic analysis. Both in the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee and on the Senate floor advocates for this bill have declared that an increase to $10.10 an hour would restore the minimum wage to the purchasing power it had in 1968. They make this claim because they use the Consumer Price Index to justify their point of view. What they are doing is starting an inflation cycle.

Look at this. If somebody is making $7 and they get moved to $10, the person who is working for $9 has to go to $12 and the person at $11 has to go to $14 and so on up. You cannot put on a new guy with no skills at a wage higher than they were before unless everybody gets a pay raise. That is wonderful. It goes all the way up the ladder. It just doesn't stop at the $14 level. In fact, it even affects seniors. The seniors' cost of living is based on wages, not on what it costs a senior to buy something. So everybody in America is going to get a raise, and that is wonderful, except—and here is the catch—in order to pay for those raises the money has to come from somewhere.

So if you like the dollar deal at your fast-food place, get ready for a dollar and a half at your fast-food place. Yes, right, it is only a 40-percent increase, but a buck and a half sounds better than $1.40, so they are going to raise it to the next level where they can pick up the customers, where it will sound good. Yes, you get a 30-percent increase, but the cost of what you buy goes up 30 percent. Did you get ahead? I don't think so.

The only one that gains in that is the Federal Government. You have moved into a higher tax bracket. That is how we raise taxes in America. We cause an inflation cycle. We give people more money and we make them pay more taxes and all they get to buy is whatever they bought before. So that purchasing power of 1968 will go up to the purchasing power of 2009 and beyond because the prices will have to go up.

My colleagues are quick to deny the CBO estimates that we have all seen which suggest their proposed plan would result in a loss of low-wage jobs. The minimum wage does not have to go up for minimum wage employees to get a raise. The proposal before the Senate throws cold water on job creation and adds to the burden businesses are already facing under the President's failed health care program.

Instead, the Senate should be considering proposals which promote job growth. The Workforce Investment Act has been out there for 8 years. It would train millions of people to jobs that are available in their community right now. It would give them skills beyond the minimum wage. Let's consider tax reform, growing U.S. exports, approving the Keystone XL Pipeline, as several of my colleagues and I recently highlighted.

But let me also speak on a personal level about the minimum wage. I have noted many times that I was a small business owner. My wife and I operated our own shoe stores in Wyoming and Montana. I know that all small business owners have families, their own and the families who work with them. One cannot credibly claim to be helping workers while at the same time hurting the businesses that employ them, especially under the guise of helping working families.

At our shoe store we hired people who didn't have basic skills. Some of them had never run a cash register. They never sold anything. They weren't sure how you dressed in the business community. We put them through courses. Each course resulted in a pay raise. For several people after several months they were actually able to earn what they were paid. Yes, it costs money to train people, especially those who have little or no skills, and those are the ones whom we need to help.

By increasing the minimum wage Congress would shut the employment door on the very individuals they are trying to help. Small business is the driver of our economy. They take these

unskilled workers and they train them. The simple fact is that an increase of minimum wage is of no benefit to a worker without a job or a job seeker without a prospect of getting a job.

I want to cover that tax problem again—the inflation issue. Minimum wage increases also start an inflation cycle. When some people get a wage increase, then everyone has to get a wage increase to recognize those who know more, do more, are more reliable, and have more skills. To pay everyone more, prices have to go up. When this happens, people will make more, but they have to spend more so they actually don't get ahead. The only one who benefits is the Federal Government because they get a tax increase.

At some point someone actually has to produce more to get more, and that can be done with new skills or a new idea with training. The problem we face is one of minimum skills, not minimum wages. The effect may be low wages, but the cause is low skills. We need to address those workers who have few, if any, of the skills they need to compete for a better job and command higher wages.

We need to start thinking in terms of skills, the kind of skills that will help students support themselves and their families in the future, that will empower our current workforce to pursue higher-paying jobs and those without a job to become selfsustaining. I sincerely hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle reconsider their plans to continue to push this effort. There are a number of bills this Senate can consider that would promote job creation over an arbitrary increase in the Federal minimum wage. Our focus should be on small businesses and creating a business environment that is friendly for growth, builds and gives people jobs that pay more than the minimum wage. Higher prices, higher taxes, and fewer jobs is not what Wyoming and the rest of the country needs in these fragile times.

I yield the floor and reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I say to my colleague from Wyoming that I disagree with him on this issue, but I do agree wholeheartedly with his observation about the importance of training people for this 21st century economy, and I have enjoyed working with him so much on the HELP Committee.

I am on the floor today to talk about the minimum wage bill that is before us this week, and once again to have the opportunity to come here and say that Washington, DC, is absolutely decoupled with the conversations people are having in Colorado, whether they are Republicans, Democrats or Independents. We had another example of that here today during this debate—if you can call it a debate—because once again there are people in the Senate who are using their prerogatives as Senators to keep us from debating a bill fully and to keep us from actually having an up-or-down vote on a bill that the vast majority of Americans support whether they are Democrats, Republicans, or Independents.

There is a reason why America supports this legislation. If you work 40 hours a week in the United States of America—the greatest country in the world—at a Federal minimum wage, you barely make over $15,000 a year. If you work 40 hours a week—week after week after week—you make $15,000 a year. A worker in this country with a spouse and two kids, a family of four—a typical family in this country—depending on the single minimum wage paycheck is in deep trouble. They are not just below the minimum wage, that family makes two-thirds of the poverty level.

A breadwinner in a family of four working at the minimum wage is more than $8,000 below the poverty line. That family with a full-time breadwinner is impoverished in the United States of America to the tune of $8,000. If you have a family who depends on you to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table, that is not enough to get by. It is not even close.

It may be hard for people here who are paid $174,000 a year to understand what it would be like to live on $15,000, but let's think a little bit about what that family's life is like. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says that even under the cheapest plan possible—the thriftiest plan possible—where the family cuts every single corner, spending as little as can be spent, it costs over $7,000 a year to feed a family of four with growing kids. It costs $7,000 under the most difficult circumstances possible. At least half of that family's $15,000 paycheck goes just to groceries—just to feeding a family and keeping them nourished. After payroll taxes, that leaves a family with less than $7,000 to cover every other cost—that is it. Food is half of what you bring home and you are left with $7,000.

In Denver, where my family lives, the average rental unit costs over $12,000 a year. That is an average. That includes tiny studio apartments. In Denver, this family of four would have to squeeze into a rental unit well under half that cost. They would need to live in a space woefully inadequate for their needs, their family, and their children. That family would have to stretch their pocket change—and whatever is left after they spend the money they barely have to feed and house their children—to cover utilities, medicine, health, clothes, transportation, school supplies, and the countless other expenses that life throws at us. It cannot be done. It is simple arithmetic.

A family such as the one I just described needs thousands of additional dollars from the Federal and local government just to get by. We don't want to have a minimum wage that is so low that people who are working 40 hours a week have to be on public assistance just to support their families. Think about how crazy that is. Someone working full time, 40 hours a week in a minimum wage job today, needs thousands of dollars in support from the Government to provide for their family. That is not what we want in America.

The situation is a lot worse than it used to be because the minimum wage is not indexed to inflation. So as costs rise, the minimum wage loses its purchasing power and stays the same until Congress raises it, which is why we are trying to have this debate here. There is no one else who can do this in America. Democratic and Republican Congresses that have dealt with this over the years have found ways to do it. Congress has raised the minimum wage over and over for precisely that reason.

Even so, today, as we stand on this floor with the responsibility to the American people, our minimum wage is down substantially from where it used to be. The Federal minimum wage stands at $7.25 an hour. That is $3.44 an hour and more than $7,000 a year below what it was in 1968 in real inflation-adjusted dollars. It is a $7,000 gap, which makes a huge difference to the family of four we just considered trying to survive on the minimum wage.

In 1968, a minimum wage job kept a family of three out of poverty. That is what the Congress did in 1968. They said if you work 40 hours a week, your family ought to live above the poverty line. A full-time worker with two children was 20 percent above the poverty line. Today that same family is 19 percent below the poverty line all because the minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation. It also has not kept pace with average earnings.

In 1968, the minimum wage was 54 percent of the average hourly pay for a U.S. worker; today it is just 36 percent. At the same time, even when you account for inflation, college costs are three times what they were four decades ago. It is no wonder that the working families I hear from in Colorado feel they are working harder than ever before but falling farther behind.

The bill we are talking about today raises the Federal minimum wage by 39 percent to $10.10 an hour. That is actually less than the 47-percent increase that is required to get back to the 1968 level. So we are still not going to be back where we were in 1968, but we will make progress in the sense that the people who are earning minimum wage will no longer be living in poverty.

Consider what this bill does for a family's ability to provide for itself. Look at just one major Federal safety net program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP. Food stamps is what that is. The reason the House of Representatives held up the farm bill for so long was over the issue of food stamps. As we think about what we are doing here and the debate we are having, I think that is important to keep in context. This is a program that millions of low-income families depend on in order to eat.

This minimum wage bill would reduce SNAP enrollments by over 7½ percent because people would now be making a living wage. That is over 3.1 million Americans who would no longer have to depend on a program to feed their kids. If you vote for this legislation, you are voting to reduce the roles of those who depend on food stamps by 3 million Americans. It is not a virtue that we have those 3 million Americans on food stamps. They ought to be earning a living wage. We would save $46 billion in SNAP payments over the next decade if we pass this bill.

It applies to other programs as well. Two-thirds of Americans who earn under $10 an hour use public assistance in some form—two-thirds, two-thirds, two-thirds. Working families—Americans who actually have a job who are working 40 hours a week—cost the Government about $243 million a year through programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, and other safety-net programs. Raising the minimum wage makes American workers less dependent on these programs to support their families.

There are many compelling reasons to raise the minimum wage. There is a compelling reason why all the surveys show that the American people, no matter what party they are in, think we ought to raise the minimum wage. Yet in a few hours, if nothing changes, a minority of Senators will most likely not even come to the floor to vote on this but will use their powers in the Senate to block an honest up-or-down vote about whether we ought to raise the minimum wage in this country. They don't even want us to have a proper debate on this bill much less pass it.

What is so radical about what we are trying to do that they won't even let us have an up or down vote? Is this somehow unprecedented? Is what we are talking about unknown in the annals of the Senate? Actually, it is not. Since the minimum wage was enacted by the Congress in the 1930s, we have managed to raise the minimum wage on 10 different occasions over 70 years. We have raised the minimum wage very routinely to try—not always successfully—to keep pace with inflation. We have done it many times.

Democratic and Republican Congresses have raised the minimum wage. Democratic Presidents have signed minimum wage increases into law and Republican Presidents have signed minimum wage increases into law. President Eisenhower signed a 33-percent increase in the minimum wage in 1955. President Nixon signed a 44-percent minimum wage increase into law in 1974. George H. W. Bush signed a 27-percent minimum wage increase into law in 1989. In 1996, a Republican-controlled Congress enacted a 21-percent minimum wage increase which President Clinton signed into law. Most recently in 2007, President George W. Bush signed a 41-percent increase into law.

You can see on this chart all the different times the minimum wage has been raised and by how much. If you look at the 10 different times we have increased the minimum wage, the average increase has been about 41 percent. This increase increases it by 39 percent, and that is below average. But to hear some people talk, you would think this bill is an unprecedented assault on American capitalism.

Tom Delay described the minimum wage earlier this year as unconstitutional. Others have said it doesn't affect a lot of workers. Several years ago the Speaker—before he was Speaker—said he would ''commit suicide before [he voted] on a clean minimum-wage bill.'' This makes no sense. It is at war with our history.

I see my colleagues are here.

I ask and beg my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who are not allowing us to have an up-or-down vote on something that the American people want—whether they are Democrats, Republicans or Independents—to allow us to have that vote.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I believe our side has 38 seconds left, and I ask unanimous consent for an additional 60 seconds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. HARKIN. Reserving the right to object.

What was the request?

Mr. VITTER. For an additional 60 seconds to the 38 seconds remaining.

Mr. HARKIN. That is fine.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE AMENDMENT

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I come to the floor to address what I consider to be a very important issue which we have never voted on, and that is the basic principle that Washington should be treated as all other Americans with regard to whatever law we pass, including ObamaCare. Specifically, my ''no-Washington-exemptions'' proposal regarding ObamaCare has yet to get a vote, so I will be filing that proposal as an amendment to the Portman-Shaheen bill.

As we can remember, late last year it was filed as an amendment to that bill when it was on the floor. There was general agreement at that time, after some back and forth, that it should and would get a vote. It was reported in The Hill on September 17 that Senator REID agreed to a vote on the amendment in the context of that bill. Senator PORTMAN agreed to this concept at the same time—September 18—on the Senate floor, and Senator SHAHEEN did as well on September 18. So I am refiling as an amendment to the same bill.

I look forward to this important debate. I look forward to a vote. Obviously, if an alternative in the near future, such as a stand-alone vote, is presented, I will be happy to accept that as well. I look forward to coming back to the floor to debate this important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. VITTER. I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, we believe that every American who works 40 hours a week deserves a fair shot at getting out of poverty. Under the present minimum-wage law, that doesn't happen. A person can work hard, with pride, as Americans do, and work that 40 hours and still be below the poverty line. That is basically not part of what America is all about, because America says to everybody, If you work hard, you can provide a decent life for yourself and your family. Since the minimum wage has stagnated, that doesn't happen.

Since 1968, the minimum wage has failed to keep up with inflation and has lost a third of its value. That is not a fair shot for Americans. A full-time minimum-wage worker makes only about $15,000 a year—not a fair shot for Americans. It is wrong. It flies in the face of the American dream.

Each Senator is allowed one guest at the State of the Union Address. I brought a young woman named Shareeka Elliott. Let me tell my colleagues about her. Shareeka is a cleaner at Kennedy Airport. She scrubs toilets and floors from 10 at night until 6 in the morning. After the overnight shift, she hops on multiple buses each day to take her two daughters to school. They are in different parts of the borough of Brooklyn. Only then is she able to get home and take care of her household. For her hard work, Shareeka is paid $8 an hour—not enough.

When we talk to Shareeka, we find she is a beautiful woman. She is not angry. But do my colleagues know what raising the minimum wage to $10.10 would do for her? Eighty dollars a week. It would allow her to provide her children with the barest of necessities—when kids can't get clothes and can't get a decent meal when they are not in school; when they can't get any toys for Christmas. That is not America.

This woman isn't a freeloader. She is getting on the bus, traveling 2 hours to Kennedy Airport, working many 8 hours from 10 at night until 6 in the morning, getting back on the bus, and then finding two more buses to take care of her children, and she can't make enough money to get out of poverty. What kind of country is this? It is hard to believe, on both the economics issue and the moral issue, that we have opposition from the other side of the aisle to even let this come to a debate.

We know what raising the minimum wage will do for the millions of Shareekas: It gives them a life with some degree of dignity. It gives their children a little more—not a lot—for

basic necessities. It pumps money into the economy. I bet most Americans would say that even if it costs me a little more—a nickel more on my hamburger to give people such as Shareeka a decent living—most Americans are generous people and they would say that is fair.

Here are our colleagues. They are back in the 19th century, saying we shouldn't do this. It is hard to believe, when we think of the 1890s and the 1930s, how people struggled to get a decent life, and they didn't think of the beauty of the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s and 1970s and 1980s when people knew if they worked hard, they could at least achieve a decent life. That American dream, symbolized by the lady who holds the statue in the harbor of the city I represent, is flickering out. We have a chance now to have it at least lit up a little more. We say no? What is going on in America?

Our colleagues are saying the economy isn't growing as fast as it should. Yet they don't want to pump money into the economy. Our bill is a win/win. Seventy-three percent of all Americans, including a majority of Republicans, support a $10.10 minimum wage. Tim Pawlenty, former Governor of Minnesota, told his colleagues to support the wage increase. When we have a few small interest groups holding this back, it is a shame.

I urge my Republican colleagues to look at our economy and then look into their hearts, and I am confident that if they did, they would have a change of heart and let us pass this bill.

I will say one final thing. If we don't succeed this time—we believe strongly in a fair shot for everybody, including those who are paid minimum wage and work hard and long—we will bring this bill to the floor again and again and again, and just as with unemployment insurance, sooner or later we will get it done. We will get it done. The American dream, a fair shot for everyone, demands no less.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish to express my strong support for increasing the minimum wage. It is outrageous that this Congress will not help middle-class workers.

This Congress needs to do two things to make sure we give a fair shot to everyone and build a stronger middle class: Raise the minimum wage and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.

I am on the side of economic fairness and building a stronger middle class to bring opportunities to families across the Nation. What is economic fairness? It means that if you work hard and play by the rules, you deserve a fair shot at the American dream.

The minimum wage is at a historic all-time low. It has lost 30 percent of its buying power compared to its peak buying power in 1968. The minimum wage only pays $15,000 a year. That is $4,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. Increasing the minimum wage to $10.10 per hour would pay $20,200 a year—lifting that family of three out of poverty.

What does increasing the minimum wage mean for Maryland? Increasing the minimum wage will give 450,000 workers in Maryland a raise. Increasing the minimum wage will improve the lives of 210,000 Maryland children because their parent just got a raise. When we raise the minimum wage, we all move a rung up on the opportunity ladder.

Congress needs to raise the minimum wage so that hard work is worth it—because a full-time job shouldn't mean full-time poverty!

That is why I am an enthusiastic cosponsor of the Fair Minimum Wage Act. This bill raises minimum wage from $7.25 per hour to $10.10 an hour over 3 years and indexes minimum wage to inflation in the future.

Minimum wage is a women's issue. Women make up two-thirds of minimum wage workers nationwide. Congress needs to raise their wages and make sure they are not being redlined or sidelined by outdated policies or harassed and intimidated when seeking justice for pay discrimination.

Being a woman costs more, and women pay more for everything. Women pay more in medical costs than men—an estimated $10,000 over a lifetime. Women are often responsible for childcare. Women even get charged more for dry cleaning! We are charged more for our blouses than men's shirts, and we are tired of being taken to the cleaners! When we earn less, we are asked to pay more.

Women are almost half of the workforce and 40 percent of them are the sole breadwinners in their families—they are tired of being paid crumbs!

Women continue to make less. Women are still making only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes. Women of color suffer even greater injustice. If you are African American, you earn 62 cents for every dollar a man makes. If you are Hispanic, you earn 54 cents for every dollar a man makes.

Everybody likes to say to us—''Oh, you've come a long way.'' But I don't think we've come a long way. We've only gained 18 cents in 50 years!

By the time she retires, the average woman will lose more than $431,000 over her lifetime because of the wage gap. That affects your Social Security and pension. It weakens your retirement security.

Not only do women make up two-thirds of minimum wage workers, women are nearly three-quarters of workers earning tips at their jobs. The minimum wage for employees who earn tips is barely over $2 per hour. The Fair Minimum Wage Act will slowly increase that base wage by less than $1 a year until it reaches 70 percent of the regular minimum wage. Increasing this wage will make a huge difference for women breadwinners who have so much to fear from a slow week in an off-peak season.

But this is not about men vs. women. It's about building a middle class. Wages have been flat for everyone. Men need a pay raise too. When they get it, we'll stand shoulder to shoulder with them—because we all need a raise to raise our families!

The Fair Minimum Wage Act is about putting change in the lawbooks and change in family checkbooks. I'm glad that Maryland is leading the way by passing legislation to raise the minimum wage to $10.10 per hour by 2018. I will keep fighting to raise the wage nationwide, and I hope Congress will follow Maryland's good example.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, we should raise the minimum wage.

It is indisputable that the minimum wage now lags far behind the cost of living. We last acted to raise the minimum wage in 2009, when we set the current rate of $7.25 an hour. Adjusted for inflation, that is just $6.62 in current dollars. And it is far lower than the rate in 1980, which was nearly $9 an hour when adjusted for inflation.

The CBO estimates that nearly 1 million Americans would rise from poverty under this legislation. And earlier this year, economists who surveyed the empirical research on this subject estimated that the impact would be far greater: roughly 4.6 million people immediately lifted above the poverty line, and 6.8 million over time.

And it is indisputable that failure to raise the minimum wage—among the lowest in the developed world—has contributed to growing income inequality. Here is what The Economist, a generally conservative publication, said in December:

> Skepticism about the merits of minimum wages remains this newspaper's starting-point. But as income inequality widens and workers' share of national income shrinks, the case for action to help the low-paid grows.

The Economist and others recognize that we should consider this issue in the context of a large issue: Increasingly, working hard is not the path it used to be to get ahead in this country. Increasingly, income goes not to working families, but to investors, to the owners of capital. The share of our national income that flows to those who work for a living has, by every measure, fallen. That is enormously troubling. This is a Nation built on the idea that hard work is the path to success, the path to a better future for our families. That breakdown of the relationship between one's labor and one's prosperity threatens to fracture the understandings that have fed our growth and success for more than two centuries.

None of the statements I have made so far are particularly controversial; they represent mainstream economic thinking. Republicans so far have one response to these facts: They say raising the minimum wage will destroy jobs. They cite this as an unassailable fact. But this position is disproved by history, and refuted by economists. When the University of Chicago surveyed leading economists last year,

they said by a four-to-one margin that the benefits of a minimum wage increase outweighed the potential costs.

Republicans have opposed minimum wage increases at any time, under any economic circumstances. Republicans are wedded to a policy of tax cuts for the wealthy, reduced protections for workers and consumers and reduced protection for the environment as the answer to any and all economic problems. Corporate profits are at an all-time high, as are income and wealth for the most fortunate Americans. But for average working families, the last 30 years have been an exercise in running to stand still, or even losing ground.

We can and must raise the minimum wage. Empirical evidence supports it, and fairness demands it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 8 minutes remaining on the Democratic side.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, in a few moments we are going to vote here in the Senate on whether we are going to bring the minimum-wage bill to the floor for debate and a vote. In a few minutes, it will be clear where each Senator stands. Who in this Chamber is going to stand with millions of Americans who work full time for a living but who are left in poverty or on the brink of poverty, struggling to make ends meet? Who is going to vote to give these good people a fair shot at the American dream, and who is going to vote against them? We are going to find out in a few minutes.

There is no question that working families need a raise. Fourteen million children in America—that is one in every five—are in a family that would get a raise under our minimum-wage bill.

Businesses need a raise. Over 600 economists—7 Nobel Prize-winning economists—have said the lack of demand is what is hurting businesses in America, because people don't have enough money to go into their stores on Main Street and buy what they need. Businesses need customers. If we raise the minimum wage, the people who are getting the raise aren't going to go to Paris, France, and spend that money. They will spend it on Main Street. That is what our businesses need.

Our economy needs a raise, because when businesses do better, they hire more workers, they add jobs, and it generates more economic growth.

People in poverty definitely need a raise. This bill, our minimum-wage bill, will lift an estimated 7 million people out of poverty. All working families need a raise.

Some of my friends on the Republican side say not all of this goes to people who are in poverty. That is absolutely true, because 12 million people who have family incomes between $20,000 and $60,000 a year will also get a raise. What is wrong with that? These hard-working families need to be able to put some money aside for a rainy day, provide for their kids' education, maybe buy a new car, buy a new home, upgrade. What is wrong with that? So, yes, this helps a lot of American families get a fair shot at the American dream.

I might add, taxpayers need a raise in the minimum wage. Right now, we are spending about one-third of $1 trillion—$243 billion a year—on social programs to help families who are struggling to make ends meet, who are low income or who are in poverty. It has been estimated that the minimum-wage bill will save $4.6 billion a year in money we won't have to pay for food stamps—$46 billion over 10 years taxpayers will save when we increase the minimum wage, because people will have the money. They will be able to go out and buy their own food and they won't need food stamps.

Again, any way we look at it, we need to raise the minimum wage.

I wish to pick up where Senator SCHUMER left off. This is about real people. This is not abstract.

This is Alicia McCrary of Northwood, IA, a wonderful woman who came to testify before our committee. She has four boys. She moved to Northwood from another State. She was in a very abusive relationship. She wanted to get her kids to a safe place, so she moved there with her four boys. She testified. She works at a fast-food restaurant. She makes $7.65 an hour. She has four boys, as I said. She is an amazing woman, working very hard. She rides a bus 20 miles each day, every day, to get to work. She wants to work full time, but the bus, which costs her $10 a day, by the way, only runs until 3 p.m., so she has to leave by then. Her wages are so low that every day she has to tell her children they can't have things their friends have. They can't play a certain sport. They can't all get a haircut at the same time. They can't even buy shoes at the same time, because she can't afford it.

Alicia does not want to be on public assistance, but she has to be. She is participating in a program run by the North Iowa Community Action Agency to help her achieve self-sufficiency and get off the system because she wants to support herself through her own work. Here are her own words:

> If the minimum wage is increased, it would be very helpful to my family. . . . I would see more reductions in TANF—

That is her public assistance and food assistance—

> and would see another increase in my rent, but that would be OK. I will have more money overall and it would come from my own hard work and my family will be better off. I want to work and stand on my own two feet. . . . I work very hard doing my job and I believe I am worth $10.10 an hour. . . . If you can move forward with increasing the minimum wage, my family will be more successful in reaching our goal of a better life.

This is the real people who will be helped by increasing the minimum wage.

I have listened to a lot of the debate on the floor and I have heard the objections from my friends on the Republican side. I have heard a lot of talk about the Keystone Pipeline and the high-paying jobs it would create. I don't doubt that it probably would. But unless Alicia is ready to pick up and move her four kids to Texas and become a petroleum engineer, it is not going to help her one bit. I haven't heard one offer from the other side that will be a single solution that would help Alicia's life be better. So the Keystone Pipeline isn't going to help Alicia, a fast-food worker who works hard every day. It is not going to put food on her table or help her boys get a haircut or get a pair of shoes or buy a computer so they can do their homework. A minimum-wage increase will do that. A minimum-wage increase will give Alicia a raise.

The American people are desperately calling for us to pass this bill. The time has come. In fact, it is past time to do the right thing, the morally correct thing, to raise the minimum wage. The time has come to give realistic hope—realistic hope, not false hope—to people such as Alicia McCrary and so many people in our country who work hard every day—millions of working Americans—to give them a realistic hope that our economic system is not going to continue to leave them further and further behind. It is time to say yes to giving a fair shot to the American dream, to being a part of the middle class, to Alicia McCrary and millions of hard-working but low-paid Americans. The time has come to raise the minimum wage.

Madam President, I yield back any remaining time.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to calendar No. 354, S. 2223, a bill to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend increased expensing limitations and the treatment of certain real property as section 179 property.

Harry Reid, Tom Harkin, Jeff Merkley, Patrick J. Leahy, Cory A. Booker, Elizabeth Warren, Jack Reed, Richard J. Durbin, Benjamin L. Cardin, Thomas R. Carper, Christopher A. Coons, Bill Nelson, Al Franken, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Sheldon Whitehouse, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Bernard Sanders.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 2223, a bill to provide for

an increase in the Federal minimum wage and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend increased expensing limitations and the treatment of certain real property as section 179 property, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER) would have voted ''nay.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 117 Leg.]

YEAS—54

Baldwin	Hagan	Murphy
Begich	Harkin	Murray
Bennet	Heinrich	Nelson
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Hirono	Rockefeller
Boxer	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Brown	Kaine	Schatz
Cantwell	King	Schumer
Cardin	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Carper	Landrieu	Stabenow
Casey	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Levin	Udall (CO)
Corker	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Markey	Walsh
Durbin	McCaskill	Warner
Feinstein	Menendez	Warren
Franken	Merkley	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Mikulski	Wyden

NAYS—42

Alexander	Flake	Moran
Ayotte	Graham	Murkowski
Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Blunt	Hatch	Portman
Burr	Heller	Reid
Chambliss	Hoeven	Risch
Coats	Inhofe	Roberts
Coburn	Isakson	Rubio
Collins	Johanns	Scott
Cornyn	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Crapo	Kirk	Shelby
Cruz	Lee	Thune
Enzi	McCain	Toomey
Fischer	McConnell	Vitter

NOT VOTING—4

Boozman	Pryor
Cochran	Wicker

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 54 and the nays are 42. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I enter a motion to reconsider the vote on which cloture was not invoked on the motion to proceed to S. 2223.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is entered.

Mr. MORAN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

225TH ANNIVERSARY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, today marks the 225th anniversary of George Washington's inaugural address to the Nation. I don't think anyone has said anything about it. That is a major thing for us to think about each year. It is the 225th anniversary.

It is reported that more than 10,000 people—this is way back 225 years ago—gathered on this day in 1789 to hear from a man who won a war and who is now ushering in an era of peace and freedom in our new Nation.

Peter Lillback is a historian, and he pointed out in his book, which I read recently, that our first President, Washington, knew that everything he was to say in the first inaugural address would set a precedent for all that was to come after him in establishing our Nation. It is why Americans should take note at how Washington weaved in with intentionality his belief in the Omnipotent.

Washington said:

> It would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first official Act, my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe.

Washington went on to say:

> No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the Affairs of men more than the People of the United States. Every step, by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.

We are here because of the hand of God. Washington's leadership was grounded in his belief in God, His law, and that liberty is God's gift. As we reflect on the anniversary of Washington's speech it is important we are reminded as a nation what our Founding Fathers sought to establish.

In this same inaugural speech Washington said:

> The destiny of the Republic model of Government, are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.

Washington's conviction was that we as Americans are entrusted by God to preserve basic freedoms established in the Constitution, such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion. The secular culture we see our Nation embracing today would seek to censor such words from a leader such as Washington. Their intolerance fails to acknowledge it was Washington's convictions and our Founding Fathers' faith values that gave us the public square.

On September 27 last year, I talked about this issue on the Senate floor—about how Oklahomans regularly ask me—and I don't think this is unique to Oklahoma; it can be true in any State—why we have an administration that suppresses our Judeo-Christian values while praising Islam. As I said then, I find it sad that our Nation does not have the same belief today that we had back when Washington was President. We have become arrogant, inward-focused individuals. Rather than submitting to God's authority, we define truth, justice, and morality by what feels good at the time.

Today, instead of having leaders who protect the church from government, we have leaders who believe it is the government's job to impose on churches what should be universally upheld as truth. As leaders, we should be protecting all Americans' freedom to practice their religion.

It is only appropriate that on this anniversary we also consider the words of Washington's Farewell Address in 1796 where he pointed out that the pillars supporting our Republic are morality and religion. In his address he said:

> Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of particular structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

We have to restore the morality of our Nation given to us by the Founding Fathers, as President Washington articulated 225 years ago. That morality is found in the Judeo-Christian values articulated not just by Washington but by all of our Founding Fathers.

As my son likes to say: Without God, the Constitution is nothing but a piece of paper.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, it has been 7 years since Congress increased the minimum wage, 7 years since Congress stood up for our working families, 7 years since Congress gave America a raise.

Earlier today the Senate had a chance to do something about that when we voted on whether to increase the minimum wage. Earlier today we had a chance to give a raise to the parents of at least 14 million children, a chance to lift nearly 1 million full-time workers out of poverty. A majority of Senators tried to do that today. Fifty-five Senators supported raising the minimum wage, but Republicans filibustered the bill, so it didn't pass. This is outrageous.

For nearly half a century, as we came out of the Great Depression, the people of this country lived by the basic principle that we all do better when we work together and build opportunities for everyone. For nearly

half a century, as our country got richer, our people got richer, and as our people got richer, our country got richer. The basic idea was that as the pie gets bigger, we all get a little more—even those who only make the minimum wage.

I know this story because it is my story. Like a lot of folks, I grew up in a family who had ups and downs. When I was 12, my daddy had a heart attack and was out of work for a long time. The bills piled up. We lost our car, and we were right on the edge of losing our home. My mom was 50 years old when she pulled on her best dress and walked to the Sears to get a job. It paid minimum wage, but back then a minimum wage job was enough to keep a family of three above water, and that is how it was for us. That is one of the ways our country built and protected America's great middle class. But that is not how it works anymore.

In 1968 the minimum wage was high enough to keep a working parent with a family of three out of poverty. In 1980 the minimum wage was at least high enough to keep a working parent with a family of two out of poverty. Today the minimum wage is not even enough to keep a fully employed mother and a baby out of poverty.

Something is fundamentally wrong when millions of Americans can work full time and still live in poverty, and something is fundamentally wrong when big companies can get away with paying poverty-level wages and then stick taxpayers with the cost when their full-time workers end up on food stamps and Medicaid.

I understand that some big businesses might like to keep things the way they are, but I really don't understand this Republican filibuster. There is nothing conservative about leaving millions of working people in poverty. There is nothing conservative about expanding enrollment in government-assistance programs. There is nothing conservative about preserving a sweetheart deal for companies that would rather milk the taxpayers for more corporate welfare than compete on a level playing field.

I am disappointed about what happened today, but I am also hopeful. A majority of the Senate—Democrats in the Senate—voted to honor work, to honor the people who get up every day and bust their tails to try to build a better life for themselves and their children. This is an uphill fight, but it is not over yet. It took us 4 months and many Republican filibusters before we finally convinced a handful of our Republican colleagues to support an extension of emergency unemployment benefits, but we passed that bill in the Senate, and we will pass this bill too, because after 7 years, with millions of our working families struggling to get by, with millions of children depending on a mom or dad who works long hours for low pay, it is long past time to increase the minimum wage.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Mr. KING. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEVY NOMINATION

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise today to take a few moments to talk about Jon David Levy, who is a nominee for the Federal district court in Maine who will be voted on this afternoon. Senator COLLINS and I have come to the floor together to talk about this nominee and his extraordinary qualifications for this position.

My history with Jon Levy is kind of interesting. He was one of my very first appointments to the bench when I was Governor of Maine in 1995. The important thing I wish to get across is I didn't know him. He wasn't a contributor, a supporter or a political ally in any way, shape or form. At that time he was a really smart lawyer with a judicial demeanor. He was recommended to me—he was discovered, if you will—by a nonpartisan judicial selection committee. I interviewed him, met him, liked him, and appointed him to the Maine District Court, which is our lower court of general jurisdiction, where it is really the people's court. He excelled in that court in terms of his decisionmaking skills as well as in his demeanor and his ability to interpret and apply the law in very real and practical circumstances.

He was so good, as a matter of fact, that as I was leaving the governorship in the last year or so, I had the opportunity to appoint him to Maine's Supreme Court. In fact, I believe he is the only person to have gone directly from our district court to the supreme court in our State without stopping in the middle at our superior court, the court of general jurisdiction, because he was so outstanding. He has proven himself as an appellate judge to be exactly what we all hoped and expected would be the case: thoughtful, deliberative, very much sensitive to the real needs of the people who are appearing before the court. He has never forgotten that the law is about serving the public.

So I think he is uniquely qualified—perhaps not uniquely but especially well qualified—for this position because he has been a trial-level judge and an appellate judge, and now he is being considered for a Federal trial-level court where I think he will be an outstanding judge. I don't think he will be; I know he will be.

The other thing I think is so important—and it happened that just a few years ago I was in our supreme judicial courtroom watching a ceremony where young lawyers were being admitted to the bar. It is a ceremony that happens every year. Of course, to the judges, it is fairly routine. To the young lawyers, it is the biggest deal in their lives thus far. It happened that the day I was there to move the admission of a young friend of mine, Justice Levy was presiding. It was an opportunity for me to watch him interact with the members of the bar and the public. Of course, a lot of members of the public are in the courtroom on that day. His whole demeanor was so thoughtful, dignified, and yet warm and not intimidating.

Having practiced law myself, my least favorite judges were those who tried to intimidate members of the bar. I remember vividly at one point being in a trial and making an argument to a judge in Maine that wasn't really going very far, and I said: Judge, I really feel as though I am batting my head against a brick wall here. After a slight pause the judge said: Mr. KING, I know of no one in Maine better equipped for that venture. I wasn't all that thrilled by that response, although he was probably right.

Justice Levy has a wonderful demeanor. He has that wonderful combination of high intelligence and yet at the same time a warm and thoughtful demeanor that is not intimidating but allows the litigants, the lawyers, and the witnesses to get their stories out, to get the record complete so that he or the jury can make the best decision.

I think he is a judge's judge. In fact, in seeking comments about his appointment to this position, I think one of the most telling comments came from the chief justice of our supreme court where he has been now for some 10 years, and her comment was, ''You tell Angus I am going to get him for this,'' which meant she doesn't want to lose him. I think that is pretty high praise—that he has been such a valuable member of that court that his colleagues thought that highly of him.

Jon Levy is, as I say, a judge's judge, really a model of what we should want on our Federal bench. I am delighted that he went through the cloture process yesterday. Thanks, in part, to my senior colleague, he received more than 60 votes. In other words, he enjoys a significant amount of bipartisan support. He was reported out of the Judiciary Committee on a strong bipartisan basis.

I am just delighted to be able to rise today and urge my colleagues to support this really extraordinary gentleman who will grace the Federal bench in Maine and will, I believe, make us all proud for having supported such an outstanding jurist who has yet many years of service to his State and his country. I believe this is a great appointment by the President, and I look forward to Jon Levy's performance on the bench.

With that, I yield the floor for my esteemed senior colleague.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I am very pleased to join my colleague from Maine, Senator KING, in supporting the nomination of Justice Jon

Levy to the U.S. District Court for the State of Maine.

As Senator KING has pointed out, Justice Levy has had a long career as an attorney and as a judge in our great State. His experience makes him well qualified for Maine's Federal district court. He was appointed to the bench by my colleague, Senator KING, when he was Governor, and Justice Levy currently serves as an associate justice on the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, a position he has held for more than a decade.

Justice Levy's legal skills have been evident for many years. After his graduation from law school where he was an editor of the law review, he clerked in the Southern District of West Virginia. Later, he was appointed to the position of special monitor in the U.S. district court for southern Texas.

In 1982, Jon and his wife had the good sense to relocate to Maine, and Jon entered private practice in York. Although his practice spanned a range of civil and criminal matters, he quickly distinguished himself in the area of family law. Jon literally wrote the book on family law. He is the author of ''Maine Family Law,'' which is a key resource on the subject for Maine's attorneys.

As both an attorney and a judge, Jon has remained very active with the local bar association and several State committees, working to improve the administration of justice in Maine. He has served as president of the York County Bar Association and received its Outstanding Member Award in 2006. He was also honored with the Maine State Bar Association's Family Law Achievement Award in 2001.

Justice Levy has been an advocate for advancing access to civil justice in Maine. He has championed initiatives to improve pro bono representation for Maine's elderly and low-income people and affordable representation for other Mainers in need of legal assistance. In the same vein, he helped to launch the Katahdin Counsel Recognition Program, an annual statewide program that honors Maine attorneys who provide more than 50 hours of pro bono service per year.

Justice Levy has also advocated for these efforts nationally, and recently joined the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants. He has worked with Maine's Juvenile Drug Treatment Court in Maine's York County, which has seen numerous successes over the years.

This combination of experiences that Justice Levy brings to the court—his experience as a private attorney I think is so important; his experience as a State judge is so critical, as is his experience in family law, in pro bono representation—makes him a well-rounded individual to serve on our courts. Many times our judges are chosen just from the ranks of either academia or because they have previously served on the bench.

Judge Levy brings both private sector and judicial experience to this important post. I believe he will serve the people of Maine and the Nation with distinction, intelligence, and integrity. So I urge my colleagues to support this nomination when we vote later today.

Again, I commend my colleague from Maine for having the good sense to start Justice Levy on this path which, I believe later today, will lead to his confirmation as a Federal judge.

Thank you, Madam President. Seeing no one seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I wish to comment on the vote we took earlier today on whether to proceed to a bill that would increase the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour.

It has been several years since we increased the minimum wage, and I support an increase in the minimum wage. But I do not believe at a time when our economy is so fragile, as is indicated by the very slow increase in GDP that was reported this morning, we can afford to increase the minimum wage by some 39 percent.

I would note that just a year ago President Obama was suggesting we should increase the minimum wage to $9 an hour. I do not see any change in the economic conditions that would have caused him to abruptly change his position and now be advocating $10.10 an hour.

I know there are many low-income families who are really struggling in this country, and I believe our economy could accommodate an increase in the minimum wage. But the Congressional Budget Office, a nonpartisan entity, has told us the consequences of going to $10.10 an hour would be a loss of some 500,000 jobs—at a time when our economy simply cannot afford that kind of loss.

I have talked with numerous employers in Maine. They care deeply about their employees. They, in most cases, are willing and able to pay more. In fact, many of them do pay more. In fact, all of them pay more than the Federal minimum wage because Maine's minimum wage is $7.50 an hour rather than $7.25 an hour. So we are already above the Federal minimum wage.

But what they told me is that if there is too much of an increase too rapidly, they will be forced to shrink their workforces or not bring on those summer part-time employees, those high school students, those college students, those individuals who do not have the training and experience that are necessary to be productive in the job for which they are hired at that time.

There is a huge area of compromise available here between $7.25 and $10.10. I think it speaks to what is wrong with Washington today that we were placed in a situation where it was take it or leave it rather than our trying to come together and offer amendments and debate the level that might be acceptable to Members of this body and our colleagues in the House—a level that would not cause dramatic job losses, which would hurt the very people we are trying to help, and yet would recognize we do need to increase the minimum wage by a reasonable amount to help struggling low-income families.

So I have to express my disappointment and frustration that we cannot seem to have a normal legislative process, where ideas could be offered as amendments, as compromises between $7.25 and $10.10, where Members could bring other ideas to the Senate floor on how we might spur job creation, on how we could improve job training programs, which is a huge issue in this country.

I have talked to so many employers in Maine, particularly in the trades, who have jobs available but cannot find the skilled workers to fill those jobs. I had a terrific and enlightening meeting with union representatives from Bath Iron Works, who told me we need to do a better job at our community colleges in training workers for the great jobs—far above minimum wage—that exist at Bath Iron Works in my State.

So there are so many ideas out there that would help us improve the financial condition of our low-income families—from increasing the minimum wage by an amount that does not cause massive job losses, to improving our job training programs so we can fix this mismatch between the jobs that are available and the skills that our workers have.

I would note that the Department of Commerce Secretary testified there are 4 million jobs that are unfilled nationwide because of that mismatch in available jobs to the skills needed to fill them.

There are other proposals to give tax incentives to small businesses. We have allowed a very important tax incentive that encouraged hiring to expire at the end of last year. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit expired. Why not extend that—not only to those groups who qualify now, but also to people who have been unemployed for a long time, to encourage employers to take a chance on them, to bring them back into the workforce, where they want to be.

We could also include other provisions. For example, I have a bipartisan bill with Senator DONNELLY and Senator MANCHIN and Members on my side of the aisle that would fix the definition of full-time work under ObamaCare so it would be 40 hours a week and not 30 hours a week. We would go back to the standard definition of 40 hours a week.

There are tax incentives having to do with bonus depreciation and small

business expensing that would encourage small businesses to make the investments so they can hire more employees.

We ought to have a full debate on all of these options, not just stop with one vote on whether to proceed to one bill to raise the minimum wage to $10.10 an hour, with no amendments allowed, with no alternative proposals being permitted.

I so believe if we could get back to the normal way of doing business, we would so much better serve the people of this country, including low-income workers who are struggling to get by. I believe we could come up with a compromise that would enjoy bipartisan support. I am not saying it would be easy, but we ought to at least try. I have talked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle who are willing to try, and we need to be given that opportunity.

Each and every Member in this body cares about individuals who are working two jobs, who may have two minimum-wage jobs because they are trying to support their families. I think we could come together. But we cannot come together unless we are allowed to offer alternatives, to fully debate the issues, and to bring forth ideas to improve our job training programs and to encourage the creation of more jobs, as well as better-paying jobs, in what, unfortunately, remains a very anemic economy.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DONALD STERLING AND DANIEL SNYDER

Mr. REID. Madam President, yesterday, all America watched while Commissioner Adam Silver and the National Basketball Association acted justly in punishing Donald Sterling for his harmful racist behavior.

Commissioner Silver banned Mr. Sterling from the NBA for life, and there was a $2.5 million fine.

I, along with most all of America, applaud the NBA's work in swiftly moving to stamp out bigotry from its ranks.

Commissioner Silver and the NBA leadership have set the standard for how professional sports organizations should act in the face of racism.

I wonder today how the leadership in the National Football League, the NFL—that money-making machine—I wonder if they have taken notice of the NBA's decisive action?

How long will the NFL continue to do nothing—zero—as one of its teams bears a name that inflicts so much pain on Native Americans?

I have 22 tribal organizations in Nevada. All over America, especially in the western part of the United States—but not only in the western part of the United States—we have large numbers of Native Americans.

It is untoward of Daniel Snyder to try and hide behind ''tradition''—tradition? That is what he says—in refusing to change the name of the team.

Tradition? What tradition? A tradition of racism is all that name leaves in its wake.

Mr. Snyder knows that in sports the only tradition that matters is winning.

So I urge Daniel Snyder to do what is morally right and remove this degrading term from the league by changing his team's name.

It has been done before—right here in Washington, DC.

Seventeen years ago, the owner of the Washington Bullets, the late Abe Pollin—a wonderful man—saw all the gun violence and murders taking place in the DC area. And what did he do? He voluntarily decided that name—the Washington Bullets—was not any good and changed it. He did not want his team to be associated with bullets. So he changed the name of the organization from the Washington Bullets to the Washington Wizards.

We have all followed the Washington Wizards over the last couple weeks. They are now in the second round of the playoffs. We are all happy about that. They have struggled for a long time. We support—the American people support—the Wizards, as do the people in the DC metropolitan area. Wizards is a good name.

Don't you think Daniel Snyder can come up with a name? It should be easy. He could invite the fans to choose a name. He could ask high school kids to come up with a name. Anything they came up with, with rare exception, would be better than the Washington team name they have now.

But since Snyder fails to show any leadership, the National Football League should take an assist from the NBA and pick up the slack. It would be a slam dunk, Madam President.

For far too long, the NFL has been sitting on its hands, doing nothing, while an entire population of Americans has been denigrated.

So I say to Commissioner Roger Goodell—I believe Roger Goodell is a good man—it is time to act. Remove this hateful term from your league's vocabulary. Follow the NBA's example and rid the league of bigotry and racism. I am sure your fans will support it.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE OVERREACH

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I rise today in defense of the U.S. Constitution, the separation of government powers it established, the rule of law it enshrined, and the legitimate prerogatives of the legislative branch—and this body in particular—under our constitutional system of government.

I am very concerned about what has been going on. Last week the Justice Department announced their plan to extend clemency consideration to a large new class of drug offenders.

Both the New York Times and the Washington Post estimate that the Department's new guidelines will potentially apply to tens of thousands of cases, with clemency likely to be granted to perhaps thousands of current Federal inmates.

This surprise announcement by the administration marks a worrying shift away from the longstanding norm requiring individualized determinations based on the particularly compelling circumstances of specific cases. Instead, the Justice Department has laid the groundwork for mass clemency based on a few widely shared and broad criteria.

Of course, the Constitution gives the President the power to grant clemency in individual cases. No one disputes this authority. It has been exercised by Presidents throughout our Nation's history, and it is properly used on a limited, case-by-case basis to ameliorate specific instances of injustice experienced by particular individuals.

By contrast, it is the rightful province of the legislative branch to establish broader sentencing policy through duly enacted Federal statute.

There is sentencing law on the books and Congress periodically revisits and revises this sentencing policy. But in our constitutional system, changing the law requires legislative action by Congress.

In the face of this most basic constitutional requirement, the President has apparently instead decided to use—or, rather, abuse—the clemency power in an attempt to rewrite sentencing law unilaterally. His invocation of clemency is merely a fig leaf to disguise a blatant effort to usurp legislative authority.

The President's clemency power is not a vehicle by which the executive branch may effectively revise or discard lawful statutes with which the President disagrees. But that is precisely what President Obama and his Justice Department have promised to do.

The amount of time that entire classes of drug offenders spend in jail will no longer be based on uniform sentencing law passed by Congress and administered by the Federal court and Judiciary. Instead, it will be determined by the President's personal views of ''justice,'' by the Attorney General's subjective notions of what he considers ''fair,'' and by some Justice Department bureaucrat's sense of ''proportionality.''

Such a result turns our system of government on its head, and it represents an abdication of the President's core constitutional duty.

Instead of faithfully executing the law, President Obama is simply seeking to enforce his personal ideological preferences. It is precisely this sort of unchecked and unaccountable rule that our Nation's Founders sought to prevent.

The Obama administration's unilateral action on drug sentencing is especially troubling since Congress is actively considering a number of potential sentencing reforms. Indeed, an ideologically diverse, bipartisan group of Senators has demonstrated they are eager to legislate on this issue. Several sentencing reform bills have been drafted and introduced. Legislation has been considered and reported by the Judiciary Committee.

Although a President should never expect to get every single idea he wants through the legislative process, bipartisan agreement here seems well within reach—especially if the administration chose to focus on working with Congress to change the law rather than acting alone to undermine it.

Yet even in an area where constructive action is achievable, the President has decided to go it alone, and in doing so he violates the most basic constitutional principles he once taught to his law school students.

Examples of such executive abuse have become all too common under this administration, especially since President Obama announced his new ''pen and phone'' strategy of unilateral action specifically designed to bypass Congress and evade constitutional restraints.

Just last week the Associated Press reported that, under orders from the White House, the Department of Homeland Security is considering limiting deportations to only criminal aliens with felony convictions.

Using the excuse of prosecutorial discretion—another executive tool limited to individual cases and particular circumstances—the administration is seeking to frustrate duly enacted immigration law and instead implement its own broad immigration policies.

Whatever our thoughts on the sensitive questions of immigration policy, everyone can agree that such an act requires legislative action and should not be brought into effect through executive fiat.

I am struck by how far this approach contrasts with the President's own judgment as recently as last fall. If the administration continued broadening enforcement carve-outs, he said, ''then essentially I'll be ignoring the law in a way that I think would be very difficult to defend legally.''

Given the lawlessness of broad enforcement carve-outs, the President stated flatly, ''that's not an option.''

President Obama went on to acknowledge that he does not in fact have the authority to halt most deportations. In his own words:

> If in fact I could pass all these laws without Congress, I would do so. But we're also a nation of laws, that's part of our tradition. The easy way out is to . . . pretend that I can do something by violating our laws, but what I'm proposing is the harder path, which is to use our democratic process to achieve the same goals.

I wish to associate myself wholeheartedly with President Obama's exhortation last fall that we are a nation of laws, and that substantive changes to the law must come about through the democratic process.

As public servants, our common allegiance must first be to the rule of law under the Constitution, as it—more than anything else—is what secures the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

I fear that President Obama's frustration with an inability to win broad support for every aspect of his legislative agenda has caused him to ignore clear legal and constitutional obligations. He now seems to view the longstanding rules, requirements, and traditions central to our system of republican self-government as irritants—mere suggestions that he is willing to bend past their breaking point in order to advance his controversial agenda.

Concern about the potential for executive overreach has animated American political life from the very beginning. Indeed, it predates our Republic, and shaped its founding.

Centuries ago, absolutist monarchs such as the Stuart dynasty of England, seizing on the powers of the medieval popes as a model, claimed a ''royal provocative'' to suspend the application of the laws, and used this power to justify their oppressive rule.

The Stuarts' unchecked reign in England—the nation that pioneered the modern conception of the rule of law—ignited a long and bloody struggle that eventually brought about the Glorious Revolution. Thereafter, the 1689 English Bill of Rights confirmed the ''ancient rights'' of Englishmen and enshrined the notion that the monarch had no ''dispensing power'' to waive the application of the laws of the realm.

As many noted historians and legal scholars have observed, the American Founders were well versed in these 17th century English constitutional struggles. Viewing themselves as heirs to the English political tradition, the Framers of our new Nation set out to establish a system of government with an eye toward preventing similar abuses.

With the old monarchy's abuse of the claimed dispensing power fresh in their minds, the Founders' initial plan of government in the Articles of Confederation did not even include an executive. When that framework proved unworkable, the Framers drafted and the States ratified a constitution that avoided either historical extreme: an all-powerful executive that claimed the power to dispense with the bounds of law or a powerless executive lacking the capacity to govern effectively.

The structural features of our Constitution navigate between these two poles, creating an energetic executive but carefully cabining his power. It vests legislative authority in Congress, not the President.

While the precise line between enforcement discretion and lawmaking may sometimes seem blurry, the Constitution makes clear that changes to the law are the province of the legislative rather than the executive branch, and that when Congress and the President have enacted statutory laws, the executive cannot unilaterally displace it.

The Constitution also requires the President to ''take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed.'' This clause does not suggest or invite the President to enforce the law—it obligates him to do so. And he is bound by the text of the Constitution to do so ''faithfully.''

To execute the laws faithfully, as defined by the great Samuel Johnson, author of the most definitive dictionary of that age, is to do so ''honestly, . . . [w]ith strict adherence to duty and allegiance, . . . and [w]ithout failure of performance.''

As a diverse array of legal scholars have noted, it is ''implausible and unnatural'' to read this clause to allow the President authority to deviate from the loyal enforcement of Federal statutes.

James Wilson, the original proponent of the take care clause, put it this way:

> [The President has] authority, not to make, or alter, or dispense with the laws, but to execute and enact the laws, which [are] established.

He continued:

> To contend that the obligation imposed on the President to see the laws faithfully executed, implies a power to forbid their execution, is a novel construction of the constitution, and entirely inadmissible.

There are certain situations in which the Executive may in fact legitimately ignore or even contravene a duly enacted Federal statute. But such circumstances are few and far between.

The Presidents of both parties have long claimed authority not to enforce unconstitutional statutes.

According to this view, if the considered view of the executive branch determines that a statute clearly violates the Constitution, the highest law, then that statute is no law at all and does not warrant enforcement.

Presidents have also sought to justify partial nonenforcement based on a lack of sufficient resources. As the Supreme Court has explained:

> The President performs his full constitutional duty, if, with the means and instruments provided by Congress and within the limitations prescribed by it, he uses his best endeavors to secure the faithful execution of the laws enacted.

In other words, the Constitution still obligates the President to do his best to ensure that duly enacted laws are faithfully executed, even when he and his subordinates are working with limited resources. In such cases he is obligated to ensure that those resources

are optimally allocated to achieve as faithful execution as is possible.

Sadly, political expedience and ideological fervor has led our current President to disregard his fundamental obligations to '' . . . take care that the laws be faithfully executed.''

Take, for example, the Nation's drug laws, an area where the Obama administration has decided it disagrees with the criminal statutes on the books and wants to implement a different policy, no matter the governing Federal law.

As I noted earlier, the administration's massive clemency push seems to employ the President's specific constitutional power—one limited to relieve individual instances of injustice—to provide relief to large swaths of criminals who fit a few broad criteria.

The President also directed major changes over which Federal drug crimes are charged and at what level, citing prosecutorial discretion, a limited authority derived from the power to adapt enforcement to an individual's specific circumstances, to implement broad criteria affecting thousands of prosecutions. Given the scope of this Executive action, compared to its narrowly tailored authority, the administration's invocation of prosecutorial discretion has become a transparent excuse used to try to justify flouting existing Federal law.

Much of the same is true in the context of immigration. The administration has advanced a growing number of enforcement carve-outs to increasingly expansive classes of illegal immigrants. First, the administration exempted those brought here as children, then veterans, then their families. Now the administration may seek to exclude from application of duly enacted immigration law anyone who has not committed serious felonies.

While, of course, no one disagrees that violent criminals should be our highest priority, the administration has come much further and essentially made current immigration law a dead letter for virtually everyone else. Last week I joined 21 of my colleagues in a letter to the White House highlighting this Executive abuse. How can the administration even claim it was attempting to faithfully execute immigration law when almost all deportations last year were limited to convicted criminals and recent border crossers, when ICE agents were forced to release 68,000 potentially deportable aliens last year alone? Think about that. When the administration took disciplinary action for ICE officers for making lawful arrests, when the President of the National ICE Council felt compelled to testify before Congress that although '' . . . most Americans assume that ICE agents and officers are empowered by the Government to enforce the law, nothing could be further from the truth.''

Another egregious example of this administration's willful failure to faithfully execute the law involves education. The Department of Education has given 42 of the 50 States waivers from application of No Child Left Behind. Rather than seek a legislative reauthorization of the statute to set realistic goals going forward, the administration has chosen simply to establish their preferred education policy by attaching their own conditions to the waivers that the States need to receive Federal money.

Recently, the State of Washington became the first to lose its waiver, primarily because it did not meet the administration's mandate for teacher and principal evaluation—a mandate that has no grounding in the actual statute. When the vast majority of States receive waivers by meeting conditions that bear little resemblance to provisions of the law itself, is the administration faithfully executing the law as required under our beloved Constitution? To the contrary, the President is using waiver conditions to bring about an entirely different set of education policies, and he is doing so to avoid spending his energies and political capital on a legislative process that might expose divisions within his own party or force his administration to compromise with those who do not share all of his policy preferences.

Of course any discussion of Executive overreach by this administration must include ObamaCare. Back when the administration was writing that 2,700-plus page monstrosity, the bill's proponents argued that its length and complexity were necessary evils, that its many intricate parts were essential to achieve the bill's promised objectives. The individual mandate, the employer mandate, the minimum coverage requirements, the cuts to Medicare Advantage, and the limits for subsidies to State-run exchanges—we were promised that these provisions and others were both critical and carefully timed to expand coverage and rein in costs. Yet when the time came to implement the law, the administration's tune changed.

To justify violating a number of clear statutory mandates, the administration has mustered a weak and unconvincing hodgepodge of legal acrobatics all for the purpose of allowing the administration to avoid enforcing the central provisions of its own signature law. When we in Congress adopted legitimate legislative fixes to provide hard-working Americans relief from ObamaCare's disruptive effects, the White House displayed shocking audacity in threatening to veto lawful delays to some of these cuts and mandates.

I don't know if anyone could imagine a better example of an administration allowing political expediency and ideological commitments to trump the President's constitutional obligations to take care that the laws be faithfully executed. Equally troubling, where the President's legislative efforts have failed, he has decided simply to regulate, seemingly undeterred from stretching his existing statutory authorities past their breaking point. Again, this is the very definition of Executive abuse.

For example, a hallmark of the President's so-called pen-and-phone strategy was to sign an Executive order forcing Federal contractors to raise their minimum wage. He issued this directive despite the fact that there is already a Federal statute that governs the minimum wage for Federal contractors.

Although a different statute gives the President some discretion in the area of Federal procurement, its plain language demands—as courts have long held—that there be a sufficient nexus between the President's orders and the statute's stated goal of efficiency and economy in Federal procurement. Increasing a contractor's labor costs by hiking their minimum wage is wholly inconsistent with this statutory goal, demonstrating there is no legal basis for the administration's Executive order.

Yet another area of grave concern is the effort by this White House to establish new institutional arrangements that fail to respect the separation of government powers and the basic principle of checks and balances enshrined in our Constitution. Take the Dodd-Frank bill, another signature piece of the President's agenda.

All Americans should be concerned with the unchecked institutional form of the newly created Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. This administration's unwaivering devotion to expanding the scope and reach of Federal regulation was made manifest in efforts to place the CFPB beyond Congress's constitutional power of the purse. The CFPB Director is empowered to collect a certain percentage of the Federal Reserve's operating expenses, indexed to inflation, thereby denying Congress its rightful authority to allocate Federal spending and keep the agency in check with respect to its overweening regulatory ambitions. What the White House sought was unaccountable Executive power, a CFPB that could regulate with virtually no meaningful restraint.

When a number of my colleagues and I expressed a desire to address the serious objections to the CFPB structure before confirming the President's choice to lead the agency, the White House decided that abiding by the appointments process established by the Constitution was too inconvenient. Determined to press forward with the administration's agenda at all costs, the President simply installed his choice for CFPB Director as well as other key Federal officers without the advice or consent of the Senate—again, the height of Executive arrogance.

The administration sought to justify this move by citing the President's power under the Recess Appointments Clause, but all the relevant legal authority suggested otherwise. The original public meaning of the clause, well-established historical practice, the constitutional requirement for the

House of Representatives to consent before the Senate may adjourn for more than 3 days, the Senate's constitutional authority to set its own rules, and the Senate's own determination that it was not in recess at the time, all of this made clear that the President had no authority to make the appointments unilaterally. Yet as an indication of its willingness to simply ignore the law and Constitution, that is precisely what the President did.

This brazen lawlessness cannot stand, and it will not. Already several Federal appeals courts have ruled that these appointments were unconstitutional, and most observers expect the Supreme Court to agree.

Yet the Obama administration remains undeterred. Having decided to bypass Congress and go it alone, the White House has likewise sought to remove meaningful accountability by means of the Federal judiciary. As in the recess appointments cases, Federal courts have rejected a variety of this administration's lawless actions and vindicated critical constitutional rights. No court has served as a greater check on Executive overreach than the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, which oversees most Federal regulatory actions. So the White House has sought to remove even this modest restraint.

After the DC Circuit rightfully invalidated several key administration actions as outside the bounds of Federal law, the President then sought to pack that court with compliant judges in order to obtain more favorable decisions.

The President's allies in this body, in their own words, ''focused very intently on the D.C. Circuit'' determined to ''switch the majority'' on the court, and were willing to ''fill up the D.C. Circuit one way or another.''

In the rush to eliminate any possible judicial obstacle to unilateral progressive advances, they ran roughshod over the rules and traditions of this body, working untold and permanent damage to two venerated institutions of our constitutional system.

This whole episode demonstrates a brazen willingness on the part of this administration to ignore virtually any legal or constitutional constraints and even tamper with the judiciary simply for the sake of advancing its own ideological goals or objectives.

I have only had time today to scratch the surface of the pattern of Executive abuses in areas as diverse as EPA, and NLRB regulatory actions, inappropriate IRS targeting, net neutrality rulemaking, and the refusal to defend the Defense of Marriage Act. Such executive lawlessness should be troubling to all Americans regardless of political stripe or partisan affiliation.

It is the Constitution, the political institutions it established, the legal framework it enshrined, the checks and balances it requires, that ensures we remain a government of laws and not of men. Absent these essential restraints, we will all become subject to increasingly arbitrary rule, a government that knows no bounds and seeks to regulate and control virtually every aspect of our lives.

President Obama once spoke of the necessity for such restraint. He warned of the dangers associated with unilateral executive action, and he highlighted the critical importance of adhering to constitutional procedures.

While campaigning for President in 2008, he said:

> I taught constitutional law for ten years. I take the Constitution very seriously. The biggest problems we're facing right now have to do with [the President] trying to bring more and more power into the executive branch and not go through Congress at all, and that's what I intend to reverse when I am President of the United States.

How far we have come since Candidate Obama made those empty promises.

I have been a Member of this body for nearly four decades. I have worked with half a dozen Presidents. On many occasions we have been able—working together—to accomplish great good for the American people. My concern today is not partisan. My criticisms are not ideological, nor is my interest as a Member of the Senate simply institutional. Throughout my years as a Member of this body, I have acknowledged and defended the power of the President when he acts lawfully—he or she. In the national security context in particular, where the President is at the height of his constitutional and statutory authorities, I have defended the prerogatives of the President no matter the party occupying the White House and no matter the political unpopularity of doing so.

The concerns I have expressed today are about legitimacy. What authority to govern does the President or any of us have except that which we derive from our Constitution? My criticisms are about restoring accountability. How are we going to keep this or any administration honest when it seeks to cut out Congress's legitimate role in the governing process?

Above all, my observations today are about liberty. Yes, that is right—liberty. If we are to maintain our freedoms, which so many of our fellow citizens have fought and died to preserve—including my own brother and two brothers-in-law—we must always remember to heed James Madison's warning in Federalist 47:

> The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny.

It is essential to the continued well-being of our Nation, to the legitimacy of our government, and to the liberties of our citizens that the exercise of Executive power is kept within lawful bounds. Doing so requires continual vigilance by the court, by Congress, and by the American people to uphold the standards of the Constitution, and that includes the President as well.

I will close with a word of warning from President George Washington which is perhaps even more true today than when President Washington spoke it way back when.

> If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed.

I thank the Presiding Officer and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, the World Health Organization has deemed this week ''World Immunization Week.'' Every year the WHO designates a whole week to promote the world's most powerful tools in public health—the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease.

Immunization is one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions ever introduced, preventing up to 3 million deaths a year from diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, polio, and measles. Thanks to decades of research, there are 25 diseases that can be prevented by vaccines, including some forms of influenza, meningitis, and even certain types of liver and cervical cancer.

The theme this year is ''Are you up-to-date?'' This year one in five children worldwide will not receive the vaccinations they need, some because their parents choose not to and others because it is just not available. Through the Global Vaccine Action Plan, the WHO and other members of the World Health Assembly are working to close this gap and promote equitable access to vaccines for every adult and child in the world. The aim—their goal—is to have all people vaccinated against preventable diseases by 2020.

One of the diseases the WHO is targeting is polio. I have a few years on the Presiding Officer, but I can recall growing up in the 1950s. When you grew up in that era, polio was a real concern. In some years 60,000 kids would come down with polio, and at that time nobody knew why. They could not figure out where it was coming from or how to stop it.

Parents—my mom included—had their theories. Some of those theories were based loosely on health and others on legend. My mother used to say: Don't you go play in that rainwater outside in the street after it rains; you could get polio. I can remember hearing that.

When we were kids, I remember the earliest television shows showed people in iron lungs and surviving in that machine that kept them alive and looking at the world through a mirror that was perched above their heads. Many people were afflicted by polio. Some of my closest friends growing up had polio. Our Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, suffered from polio as a child. It was not uncommon. It was way too common.

Then came the day in 1955 when Jonas Salk came up with the Salk vaccine. It was such an amazing piece of news. It was shared in every classroom across the country. They had a vaccine. It involved a shot, and none of us were excited about that, but the idea of being protected for life from polio was worth it.

Then came along the Sabin oral vaccine, which we were even happier to hear about.

It was an indication to a lot of people that with hard work and research cures could be found.

It was April 12, 1955, when Dr. Thomas Francis, Jr., an epidemiologist at the University of Michigan and a mentor to Salk, announced that Salk discovered a polio vaccine that was safe and effective. When that announcement was made, families across America celebrated. We couldn't wait to get in line. April 12 was deliberately chosen for the announcement because it marked the 10th anniversary of the death of the most famous polio survivor of all—President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt also founded the March of Dimes Foundation in 1938, without which Salk may not have had the resources to complete his research. A massive field trial led to the release of the vaccine, the first of its kind. It was conducted on 1.8 million children in America, and it was proven 80 to 90 percent effective. We achieved this victory over polio. It really was a big deal. As a result, polio was eradicated in the United States of America in 1979.

In February the Senate passed a resolution I cosponsored with Senator KIRK of Illinois supporting World Polio Day. This resolution commended not only the work of Jonas Salk but also the Rotary Club, WHO, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and UNICEF for their work to eradicate polio. These organizations have joined with the United States and other national governments to successfully reduce cases of polio by more than 99 percent. We now believe there are only three nations on Earth where there is evidence of polio: Nigeria, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The success of the polio vaccine showed the public what medical research could accomplish and encourage.

Yesterday Chairman MIKULSKI of the Senate Appropriations Committee had a hearing on research, and we had some great witnesses. Among them was Dr. Francis Collins, who is the head of the National Institutes of Health. They came to talk about America's investment in research and innovation. You would think that with the success of the Salk polio vaccine and all the other things that have followed, that America would have learned a valuable lesson about this investment. Sadly, today, some 60 years after the discovery of the Salk polio vaccine, we are not making progress as we should. In fact, in some respects we are falling behind.

Because of our failure to adequately fund the National Institutes of Health over the last 10 or 12 years, we have seen a 20-percent decline in the awards for medical research.

I talked to Dr. Francis Collins about this 2 or 3 months ago. He heads up the NIH. He is a brilliant, wonderful man who was in charge of mapping the Human Genome Project. He did it ahead of time and on budget and produced a wealth of information that is now being used to find cures for diseases.

A month or so ago, the National Institutes of Health introduced their AMP Program where they engaged the 10 largest pharmaceutical companies in America to join with the NIH to use the human genome to find cures for the following diseases: Alzheimer's, type 2 diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. Those are the first three targets they are going to go after. We need to go after more, and we need to encourage them for several reasons:

First, if we don't make an investment in medical research that future generations of researchers can count on, young people will not dedicate their lives to medical research.

Think of this for a moment: 30 years ago 18 percent of all the NIH medical researchers were under the age of 36. Now it is 3 percent. Younger people are not moving toward medical research because they are uncertain of our national commitment in this area. Shame on us. At a time when we should be enticing the best and brightest in the world to get involved in biomedical research, our indecision and lack of leadership at the governmental level is failing to fund these entities and this effort.

I asked Dr. Collins: What is the kind of commitment we should make as a nation in medical research that can make a dramatic difference?

He said: Senator, if you could give us 5 percent real growth a year beyond inflation, 5 percent a year for 10 years, I will promise you we will make dramatic progress.

So I did a calculation. I asked my staff what it would cost us as a nation to increase medical research 5 percent a year for 10 years. Well, they added the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Defense medical research, and the Veterans' Administration medical research. They said: All right. Put them all together. If we gave them a 5-percent raise each year, how much would it cost over 10 years? The answer: $150 billion.

That is a huge sum of money, but in that same period of time we are likely to budget over $18 trillion in spending for the government. It is a very tiny piece of the overall spending of our government.

Some people who are budget hawks will step back and say: Great idea, Senator, but we just can't afford it. We can't afford to commit to coming up with $150 billion over 10 years.

I would ask them to consider two things:

First, last year in the United States of America, the Federal Government spent, through the Medicare and Medicaid Programs, over $200 billion treating one disease: Alzheimer's. If through our medical research we could find some blessed cure for this terrible disease or even delay its onset, it would more than pay for the amount of money we would have to invest in medical research. It is that important.

Secondly, there are things we can do which I will stand up and say I am prepared to do which would fund a major part of this research. If we increased the Federal tax on tobacco products by 95 cents a package, it would pay for more than half of the medical research I just suggested. Over a 10-year period of time, 900,000 American lives would be saved because children wouldn't be able to afford to buy these tobacco products.

So this medical research commitment is not only a good one in terms of reducing our costs of medical care, but it also is something we ought to achieve in order to make sure there will be breakthroughs in the years ahead to eliminate and treat many of the diseases which haunt us and our families across America.

The American Cures Act is a bill I have introduced. I am happy to have a number of my colleagues cosponsoring it. It has the support of virtually all of the major medical research organizations. It should be bipartisan, and I hope those on the other side of the aisle who share my commitment to medical research will join me.

Discovering the polio vaccine won Jonas Salk the Nobel Prize and allowed him to create the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, one of the premier institutes for biomedical research. If he had done nothing else, Salk's place in history would have been honored and assured. But Jonas Salk wasn't content to rest on past achievement. After all, he was an American. In the last years of his life, he spent his time searching for a cure for AIDS. When his early efforts failed, he was undeterred. When asked why, he said: You can only fail if you stop too soon. This is a decisive moment in the history of our Nation. We have to continue to invest in order to reap the immense rewards of decades of work by the best scientific and medical minds in the world. The only way we can fail is by stopping too soon.

SHAH NOMINATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I rise to speak in support of Manish

Shah, who has been nominated to serve as a Federal district court judge in the Northern District of Illinois. Mr. Shah is an outstanding nominee. He has the experience, qualifications and integrity to serve with distinction on the Federal bench.

Mr. Shah was nominated to fill the seat that became vacant when Judge Joan Lefkow took senior status. He has been reviewed by my judicial screening committee, and he was chosen by Senator KIRK's committee to serve and I supported the selection.

He is a Federal prosecutor in the Northern District of Illinois. He is currently chief of the criminal division of that office and he has a lengthy resume of achievements in this field.

Mr. Shaw has won numerous awards and recognitions for his work in the U.S. attorney's office, including the FBI Director's Award for Outstanding Criminal Investigation. He graduated from Stanford University and the University of Chicago Law School. He clerked for 2 years for Judge Jim Zagel of the Northern District of Illinois.

Incidentally, his nomination in the Northern District of Illinois is historic. Upon confirmation, he will be the first article III judge of South Asian descent to serve in the State of Illinois. He appeared before the Judiciary Committee last November in a hearing that I chaired. He was reported out unanimously from that committee.

I am sorry it has taken so long for us to get to his nomination on the calendar, but I am certain he will be an excellent addition to the bench for the Northern District of Illinois.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

BASTIAN NOMINATION

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I rise today to express my support for the nomination of Stanley Bastian to be a district judge for the Eastern District of Washington. Stan Bastian is exactly the kind of highly qualified Federal judge eastern Washington needs.

The Eastern District of Washington represents a wide swath of Washington that includes 20 counties that cover 63 percent of our State. Yet the court has been operating with two vacancies. So it is time for the Senate to move forward on filling this position, and I hope we confirm Mr. Bastian today. I also hope we can move forward on a vote on Salvador Mendoza in the coming weeks as well.

Mr. Bastian has been called an ''outstanding choice'' for the Eastern District bench, and I want to make sure we understand why. He was born in Washington and is well versed in Pacific Northwest issues. As my colleagues Mr. WYDEN and Mr. MERKLEY will note, he is a graduate of the University of Oregon, but he also went to law school at the University of Washington. Mr. Bastian has handled a diverse portfolio of legal matters, including representing counties, public utility districts, fruit growers, medical clinics, brokers, and individuals, and he brings more than 30 years of experience to the Federal bench, including 25 years in private practice.

He has well rounded experience from all sides of the legal process, from civil and criminal trials to mediation, arbitration, and negotiations between various parties. Throughout his career, Mr. Bastian has shown a dedication to justice and equal access to the law. As an experienced trial attorney, he has earned the support and recognition of his peers.

When I interviewed Mr. Bastian, I was impressed by his respect for legal precedent and his commitment to the rule of law, his work to improve access to justice, and his local knowledge that has been very important in serving eastern Washington and all of Washington.

Mr. Bastian also served as a judicial pro tem in municipal courts, and recently he had the opportunity to lead the Washington State Bar Association. As the president of that organization, Mr. Bastian focused on ethics, professionalism, and civility in the legal profession. He has a long and wide-ranging background in the law and in the legal community, and that is exactly why we should put him on the Federal bench.

His legal career exemplifies public service, a commitment to access to justice, and a stellar legal intellect. I am confident he will serve the Eastern District well.

So I hope we move forward on these nominees this afternoon and confirm Mr. Bastian.

I thank the Chair and I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following disposition of the Levy nomination, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 711, that there be 2 minutes for debate, equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, prior to a vote on confirmation of that nomination; further, that notwithstanding rule XXII, on Thursday, May 1, 2014, at 11 a.m., the Senate proceed to executive session and vote on the cloture motions for Calendar Nos. 591, 592, and 575; further, that if cloture is invoked on any of these nominations, all postcloture time be expired and at 1:45 p.m., the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of Calendar Nos. 591, 592, 730, and 701; further, that on Monday, May 5, at 5:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session and vote on confirmation of Calendar Nos. 575 and 703; further, that there be 2 minutes for debate prior to each vote, equally divided in the usual form, that any rollcall votes following the first in each series be 10 minutes in length and, if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. With this agreement, we will have up to seven rollcall votes this afternoon and as many as three rollcall votes beginning at 11 a.m. tomorrow, and as many as four rollcall votes tomorrow afternoon beginning at about a quarter of 2.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that even though we are a minute or so short, we start the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF SHERYL H. LIPMAN TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE

NOMINATION OF STANLEY ALLEN BASTIAN TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

NOMINATION OF MANISH S. SHAH TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

NOMINATION OF DANIEL D. CRABTREE TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS

NOMINATION OF CYNTHIA ANN BASHANT TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

NOMINATION OF JON DAVID LEVY TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF MAINE

NOMINATION OF ROBERT O. WORK TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nominations of Sheryl H. Lipman, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee; Stanley Allen Bastian, of Washington, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington; Manish S. Shah, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois; Daniel D. Crabtree, of Kansas, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas; Cynthia Ann Bashant, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California; Jon David Levy, of Maine, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maine; and Robert O. Work, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have not had the opportunity—and it is my fault—to speak to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, but hoping he will not be upset, I ask unanimous consent that the 2 minutes prior to this first vote be yielded back, and then I will talk to Senator LEAHY to see how he feels about the others.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON LIPMAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Sheryl H. Lipman, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee?

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 118 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Alexander	Casey	Flake
Ayotte	Chambliss	Franken
Baldwin	Coats	Gillibrand
Barrasso	Coburn	Graham
Begich	Collins	Grassley
Bennet	Coons	Hagan
Blumenthal	Corker	Harkin
Blunt	Cornyn	Hatch
Booker	Crapo	Heinrich
Boxer	Cruz	Heitkamp
Brown	Donnelly	Heller
Burr	Durbin	Hirono
Cantwell	Enzi	Hoeven
Cardin	Feinstein	Inhofe
Carper	Fischer	Isakson
Johanns	Merkley	Schumer
Johnson (SD)	Mikulski	Scott
Johnson (WI)	Moran	Sessions
Kaine	Murkowski	Shaheen
King	Murphy	Shelby
Kirk	Murray	Stabenow
Klobuchar	Nelson	Tester
Landrieu	Paul	Thune
Leahy	Portman	Toomey
Lee	Reed	Udall (CO)
Levin	Reid	Udall (NM)
Manchin	Risch	Walsh
Markey	Roberts	Warner
McCain	Rockefeller	Warren
McCaskill	Rubio	Whitehouse
McConnell	Sanders	Wyden
Menendez	Schatz	

NOT VOTING—5

Boozman	Pryor	Wicker
Cochran	Vitter	

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON BASTIAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate prior to a vote on the Bastian nomination.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all remaining debate time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Stanley Allen Bastian, of Washington, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington?

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 119 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Alexander	Cruz	Kaine
Ayotte	Donnelly	King
Baldwin	Durbin	Kirk
Barrasso	Enzi	Klobuchar
Begich	Feinstein	Landrieu
Bennet	Fischer	Leahy
Blumenthal	Flake	Lee
Blunt	Franken	Levin
Booker	Gillibrand	Manchin
Boxer	Graham	Markey
Brown	Grassley	McCain
Burr	Hagan	McCaskill
Cantwell	Harkin	McConnell
Cardin	Hatch	Menendez
Carper	Heinrich	Merkley
Casey	Heitkamp	Mikulski
Chambliss	Heller	Moran
Coats	Hirono	Murkowski
Coburn	Hoeven	Murphy
Collins	Inhofe	Murray
Coons	Isakson	Nelson
Corker	Johanns	Paul
Cornyn	Johnson (SD)	Portman
Crapo	Johnson (WI)	Reed
Reid	Scott	Udall (CO)
Risch	Sessions	Udall (NM)
Roberts	Shaheen	Walsh
Rockefeller	Shelby	Warner
Rubio	Stabenow	Warren
Sanders	Tester	Whitehouse
Schatz	Thune	Wyden
Schumer	Toomey	

NOT VOTING—5

Boozman	Pryor	Wicker
Cochran	Vitter	

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON SHAH NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Manish S. Shah, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois?

• Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate Manish Shah. I am proud to have put forward Mr. Shah to be a Federal district court judge for Northern Illinois. I thank President Obama for nominating him. I thank the Senate for voting to confirm Manish Shah.

Senator DURBIN, Illinois' senior Senator, and I work to ensure Illinois has highly skilled judges to help strengthen our courts. Mr. Shah was such a judicial nominee.

In Illinois, Mr. Shah has established himself as an outstanding lawyer and dedicated public servant. He was among the most experienced prosecutors in the Northern District of Illinois. Now with Senate confirmation, Mr. Shah starts the next phase of his legal career. He is ready to take a seat on the Federal bench.

We, as Americans, should be proud of Manish Shah. He is a great American success story. Mr. Shah was born in New York. His parents emigrated from India and raised their two sons in West Hartford, CT. Mr. Shah attended Stanford University and graduated with honors and distinction. He attended the University of Chicago Law School, and again he graduated with honors.

After law school, Shah was a litigation associate at Heller Ehrman in San Francisco and clerked for Hon. James B. Zagel of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Mr. Shah joined the Chicago U.S. attorney's office in September 2001 and prosecuted violent crime, international drug trafficking, complex fraud, and public corruption. During his time as a Federal prosecutor, Mr. Shah developed a stellar record—notably, Mr. Shah worked with former U.S. attorney Patrick Fitzgerald. Mr. Shah and a team of prosecutors and Federal agents investigated and prosecuted a series of cases arising out of the city of Chicago's Hired Truck Program and Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

While working at the U.S. attorney's office Mr. Shah served in several leadership positions. He was a deputy chief of the General Crimes Section and the Financial Crimes and Special Prosecutions Section, and he was the chief of the Appellate Section. Mr. Shah was the chief of the Criminal Division and

responsible for supervising the prosecutions in the Northern District of Illinois handled by the approximately 130 Assistant U.S. attorneys. These are the types of life and work experiences that make great judges.

Mr. Shah will be a knowledgeable jurist who will provide a fair forum for the resolution of civil disputes and the prosecution of alleged crimes. I am sure Mr. Shah will have a long and stellar career on the Federal bench in the Northern District of Illinois. I am certain Mr. Shah will be a top-rate judge.

I congratulate Mr. Shah on his confirmation. I look forward to following his judicial career.

Congratulations, Manish Shah. I wish you well.●

Mr. FRANKEN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 120 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Alexander	Gillibrand	Moran
Ayotte	Graham	Murkowski
Baldwin	Grassley	Murphy
Barrasso	Hagan	Murray
Begich	Harkin	Nelson
Bennet	Hatch	Paul
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Portman
Blunt	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Heller	Reid
Boxer	Hirono	Risch
Brown	Hoeven	Roberts
Burr	Inhofe	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Isakson	Rubio
Cardin	Johanns	Sanders
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Schumer
Chambliss	Kaine	Scott
Coats	King	Sessions
Coburn	Kirk	Shaheen
Collins	Klobuchar	Shelby
Coons	Landrieu	Stabenow
Corker	Leahy	Tester
Cornyn	Lee	Thune
Crapo	Levin	Toomey
Cruz	Manchin	Udall (CO)
Donnelly	Markey	Udall (NM)
Durbin	McCain	Walsh
Enzi	McCaskill	Warner
Feinstein	McConnell	Warren
Fischer	Menendez	Whitehouse
Flake	Merkley	Wyden
Franken	Mikulski	

NOT VOTING—5

Boozman	Pryor	Wicker
Cochran	Vitter	

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON CRABTREE NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Daniel D. Crabtree, of Kansas, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas?

Mr. SESSIONS. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) and the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN, the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 121 Ex.]

YEAS—94

Alexander	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Ayotte	Graham	Murphy
Baldwin	Grassley	Murray
Barrasso	Hagan	Nelson
Begich	Harkin	Paul
Bennet	Hatch	Portman
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Blunt	Heitkamp	Reid
Booker	Heller	Risch
Boxer	Hirono	Roberts
Brown	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Cantwell	Isakson	Sanders
Cardin	Johanns	Schatz
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Chambliss	Kaine	Sessions
Coats	King	Shaheen
Coburn	Kirk	Shelby
Collins	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Coons	Landrieu	Tester
Corker	Leahy	Thune
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Levin	Udall (CO)
Cruz	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Markey	Walsh
Durbin	McCain	Warner
Enzi	McCaskill	Warren
Feinstein	McConnell	Whitehouse
Fischer	Menendez	Wyden
Flake	Merkley	
Franken	Moran	

NOT VOTING—6

Boozman	Mikulski	Vitter
Cochran	Pryor	Wicker

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON BASHANT NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Cynthia Ann Bashant, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California?

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the nomination of Judge Cynthia Bashant to the Federal district court in San Diego.

As my colleagues know, I recommend candidates to the President through a bipartisan judicial selection process. Judge Bashant excelled in this process, earning my recommendation to President Obama.

I am confident she will do an outstanding job on the Federal bench.

She earned her bachelor's degree from Smith College in 1982 and her law degree from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law in 1986.

She spent 3 years practicing civil litigation at the law firm MacDonald Halsted & Layborne, which later became part of the firm Baker & McKenzie.

In 1989, she joined the U.S. attorney's office in San Diego, where she tried at least 15 cases in Federal court.

Judge Bashant served as deputy chief of the narcotics unit in San Diego from 1995 to 1997, and then as chief of the border crimes unit from 1997 to 1998.

During her prosecutorial career, she prosecuted numerous important cases. One was a major drug trafficking case that involved: the Sinaloa drug cartel; a 1,600–foot tunnel under the southern border; 23 defendants; and wiretaps in Chicago, San Antonio, Los Angeles, and San Diego.

She prosecuted an individual who robbed more than 20 banks, a local record in San Diego at the time.

Just after the Violence Against Women Act passed in 1994, Judge Bashant prosecuted the first Federal domestic violence case in the Southern District of California and one of the first in the Nation.

The defendant was accused of luring his wife, who had just filed for divorce, into their car, after which he took her to Mexico against her will, beat her black and blue, and cut off all of her hair. The defendant pleaded guilty to violating a provision of VAWA designed to criminalize precisely this sort of conduct.

In one of her other cases, the defendant was a human smuggler. To avoid a checkpoint, he led a large group of undocumented immigrants across the Interstate 5 freeway on foot. The group included a mother and her six children, ranging in age from 6 to 15 years old.

The 6-year old boy was killed by oncoming traffic in front of his mother. The smuggler simply left the mother and her five other children by the side of the road.

In preparation for trial, Judge Bashant met extensively with the mother, who understandably was distraught and afraid to testify. Judge Bashant and the mother's sister helped the mother be ready to testify against the smuggler.

Ultimately, Judge Bashant secured a guilty plea from the defendant, and the court imposed several sentencing enhancements on him.

For her work on this case, Judge Bashant won the Justice Department's Victim-Witness Award.

She also won numerous other DOJ awards, including the Director's Award for Superior Performance and special commendations 6 years in a row.

In 2000, Judge Bashant was appointed to the San Diego Superior Court.

As a judge, she has presided over more than 1,000 cases that have gone to verdict or judgment—including more than 100 criminal jury trials.

She has been a leader on the superior court, as well as in the San Diego community. Most recently, she was presiding judge of the Juvenile Court from 2009 to 2012.

In 2012, the San Diego Juvenile Justice Commission named her Judge of the Year.

She served as chair of the San Diego Commission on Children, Youth, and Families, which advises the county board of supervisors on issues affecting family well-being.

She served on the San Diego County Child Abuse Prevention Coordinating Council as well.

She also has served as president and currently serves on the advisory board of the Lawyers Club of San Diego—a highly respected organization that works to promote gender equality in the legal profession.

She also has served on the board of the Children's Initiative of San Diego, which was established in 1992 to advocate for effective policies to support the health and well-being of children, youth, and families in San Diego.

Simply put, Judge Bashant is a perfect fit for this position. She has experience in private practice. She spent 11 years as a Federal prosecutor in San Diego. She has been running her own courtroom for 13 years.

I have no doubt she will hit the ground running on the Southern District, which has the third-greatest criminal caseload per judgeship in the Nation.

Beyond her qualifications and experience, Judge Bashant clearly is an outstanding woman and a real leader. As one of her judicial colleagues told my judicial selection committee, Judge Bashant is ''an energetic, smart, really impressive hard worker who 'really cares.' ''

So, I am very proud to have recommended Judge Bashant to the President, and I urge my colleagues to support her nomination.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 122 Ex.]

YEAS—94

Alexander	Gillibrand	Moran
Ayotte	Graham	Murkowski
Baldwin	Grassley	Murphy
Barrasso	Hagan	Murray
Begich	Harkin	Nelson
Bennet	Hatch	Paul
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Portman
Blunt	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Heller	Reid
Boxer	Hirono	Risch
Brown	Hoeven	Roberts
Burr	Inhofe	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Isakson	Sanders
Cardin	Johanns	Schatz
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Chambliss	Kaine	Sessions
Coats	King	Shaheen
Coburn	Kirk	Shelby
Collins	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Coons	Landrieu	Tester
Corker	Leahy	Thune
Cornyn	Lee	Toomey
Crapo	Levin	Udall (CO)
Cruz	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Markey	Walsh
Durbin	McCain	Warner
Enzi	McCaskill	Warren
Feinstein	McConnell	Whitehouse
Fischer	Menendez	Wyden
Flake	Merkley	
Franken	Mikulski	

NOT VOTING—6

Boozman	Pryor	Vitter
Cochran	Rubio	Wicker

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the last rollcall vote will occur in a matter of a few seconds, and after that there will be a voice vote.

The first series of votes tomorrow will be at 11:15 a.m. Starting at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow afternoon, we will have up to four votes. If we are fortunate, there will only be two or three votes.

This is the last vote tonight. We start at 11:15 a.m. tomorrow morning, and then at 1:45 p.m. tomorrow afternoon.

VOTE ON LEVY NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Jon David Levy, of Maine, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maine?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), and the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 75, nays 20, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 123 Ex.]

YEAS—75

Alexander	Franken	Mikulski
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Grassley	Murphy
Begich	Hagan	Murray
Bennet	Harkin	Nelson
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Paul
Blunt	Heitkamp	Portman
Booker	Hirono	Reed
Boxer	Hoeven	Reid
Brown	Isakson	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Johnson (SD)	Rubio
Cardin	Kaine	Sanders
Carper	King	Schatz
Casey	Kirk	Schumer
Chambliss	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Coats	Landrieu	Stabenow
Collins	Leahy	Tester
Coons	Levin	Thune
Corker	Manchin	Udall (CO)
Cornyn	Markey	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	McCain	Walsh
Durbin	McCaskill	Warner
Feinstein	McConnell	Warren
Fischer	Menendez	Whitehouse
Flake	Merkley	Wyden

NAYS—20

Barrasso	Hatch	Risch
Burr	Heller	Roberts
Coburn	Inhofe	Scott
Crapo	Johanns	Sessions
Cruz	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Enzi	Lee	Toomey
Graham	Moran	

NOT VOTING—5

Boozman	Pryor	Wicker
Cochran	Vitter	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 75, the nays are 20. The nomination is confirmed.

VOTE ON WORK NOMINATION

Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Robert O. Work, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, earlier this month, the U.S. Supreme Court once again chose to dismantle campaign finance laws which had protected hard-working Americans for decades. In McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission, a sharply divided Court held that aggregate limits on campaign contributions are a violation of the First Amendment. These were the same five justices who, just 4 years ago, reversed a century of precedent in Citizens United by declaring that corporations have a First Amendment right to endlessly finance and influence elections. Rather than increasing access and encouraging participation for all Americans, this Court continues to rule against our democratic principles and in favor of moneyed interests.

The Court's recent dismantling of campaign finance laws has been devastating. As Justice Breyer warned in his dissent:

> Taken together with Citizens United, [the McCutcheon] decision eviscerates our Nation's campaign finance laws, leaving a remnant incapable of dealing with the grave problems of democratic legitimacy that those laws were intended to resolve.

I could not agree with him more.

Nobody who has watched our elections or even tried to watch television since the Citizens United decision can deny the enormous impact that decision has had on our political process. In small states like Vermont, that decision coupled with McCutcheon poses an even greater risk. I have heard time and again from Vermonters concerned about these toxic effects, and I agree that something must be done. That is why I have cosponsored the DISCLOSE Act since 2010 to restore transparency and accountability to campaign finance laws, and that is why we have held multiple hearings in the Judiciary Committee on the impact of these alarming Supreme Court decisions. Earlier this month I announced that the Judiciary Committee would have another hearing on this issue. That hearing will take place in June. We will hear testimony from individuals who have witnessed the real impact these harmful decisions have had on Americans seeking to exercise their right to vote and to be heard.

The Judiciary Committee's hearing will also take place close to the anniversary of yet another devastating Supreme Court decision. Last June, as the Nation prepared to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington where Dr. Martin Luther King delivered his historic ''I Have a Dream'' speech, the same narrow majority of the Supreme Court struck down the coverage provision of the Voting Rights Act and effectively gutted the most successful piece of civil rights legislation in this Nation's history in Shelby County v. Holder.

The Voting Rights Act, including the coverage formula and Section 5, was reauthorized and signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2006, after the Senate voted 98–0 and the House voted 390–33 in favor of the reauthorization. Yet the Court struck down a key provision of the Act despite the fact that it has worked to protect the Constitution's guarantees against racial discrimination in voting for nearly five decades. In striking down the coverage formula in the Voting Rights Act, the Court dramatically undercut Section 5's ability to protect American voters from racial discrimination in voting. The result is that many Americans who were protected by this law have now been left vulnerable to discriminatory practices and have had much greater difficulty accessing the ballot box. Along with other lawmakers, I have introduced a bipartisan and bicameral bill, S. 1945, to respond to the Court's decision and would reinvigorate the most vital protections of the Act. I hope Senate Republicans will work with me on this important effort.

This current Supreme Court's pattern of denying access to the ballot box for everyday Americans while expanding the ability of billionaires and corporations to buy elections is disturbing, to say the least. In an article by Ari Berman at The Nation dated April 2, the author states that ''The Court's conservative majority believes that the First Amendment gives wealthy donors and powerful corporations the carte blanche to buy an election but that the Fifteenth Amendment does not give Americans the right to vote free of racial discrimination.'' Since the Court's ruling in Shelby County, eight states previously covered under Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act have since passed or implemented new voting restrictions and voters are already seeing the consequences of that lack of protection. Mr. Berman concludes that ''[a] country that expands the rights of the powerful to dominate the political process but does not protect fundament rights for all citizens doesn't sound much like a functioning democracy to me.'' I agree and I ask unanimous consent to have this article printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

Sara Mayeux at Harvard Law School observed that the Court began its McCutcheon opinion by noting that ''There is no right more basic in our democracy than the right to participate in electing our political leaders'' yet, this same narrow majority discarded that very principle just last year when it struck down a key provision of the Voting Rights Act in Shelby County—a case that was much more about the right to participate in electing our political leaders than this one.

The observation is consistent with the disturbing trend exhibited by this Court in Citizens United, McCutcheon, and Shelby County, which is that the Court underscores and endorses the rights of corporations and billionaires to participate in our democracy, and yet dismisses that same right for the average American to participate in our elections and to vote free from discrimination.

Every American should understand how devastating these rulings are to our system of democracy. Time and again, this narrow majority of conservative Justices has substituted their own preferences for those of the duly-elected Congress, despite the Supreme Court's own precedents. This Court's disregard for Congressional findings about both the threat of corruption and the irreparable harm of racial discrimination in voting demonstrates how out of touch with reality some of the Justices have become. These sharply-divided rulings undermine the fundamental concept that our democracy is supposed to work for all Americans. I will continue to work on behalf of the American people to see that all Americans and not just a wealthy few will continue to have a right to participate in our representative democracy and to have their voices heard.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The Nation, Apr. 2, 2014]

THE SUPREME COURT'S IDEOLOGY: MORE MONEY, LESS VOTING

(By Ari Berman)

In the past four years, under the leadership of Chief Justice John Roberts, the Supreme Court has made it far easier to buy an election and far harder to vote in one.

First came the Court's 2010 decision in Citizens United v. FEC, which brought us the Super PAC era.

Then came the Court's 2013 decision in Shelby County v. Holder, which gutted the centerpiece of the Voting Rights Act.

Now we have McCutcheon v. FEC, where the Court, in yet another controversial 5–4 opinion written by Roberts, struck down the limits on how much an individual can contribute to candidates, parties and political action committees. So instead of an individual donor being allowed to give $117,000 to campaigns, parties and PACs in an election cycle (the aggregate limit in 2012), they can now give up to $3.5 million, Andy Kroll of Mother Jones reports.

The Court's conservative majority believes that the First Amendment gives wealthy donors and powerful corporations the carte blanche right to buy an election, but that the Fifteenth Amendment does not give Americans the right to vote free of racial discrimination.

These are not unrelated issues—the same people, like the Koch brothers, who favor unlimited secret money in US elections are the ones funding the effort to make it harder for people to vote. The net effect is an attempt to concentrate the power of the top 1 percent in the political process and to drown out the voices and votes of everyone else.

Consider these stats from Demos on the impact of Citizens United in the 2012 election:

The top thirty-two Super PAC donors, giving an average of $9.9 million each, matched the $313.0 million that President Obama and Mitt Romney raised from all of their small donors combined—that's at least 3.7 million people giving less than $200 each.

Nearly 60 percent of Super PAC funding came from just 159 donors contributing at least $1 million. More than 93 percent of the money Super PACs raised came in contributions of at least $10,000—from just 3,318 donors, or the equivalent of 0.0011 percent of the US population.

It would take 322,000 average-earning American families giving an equivalent

share of their net worth to match the Adelsons' $91.8 million in Super PAC contributions. That trend is only going to get worse in the wake of the McCutcheon decision.

Now consider what's happened since Shelby County: eight states previously covered under Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act have passed or implemented new voting restrictions (Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Mississippi, Texas, Virginia, South Carolina and North Carolina).

That has had a ripple effect elsewhere. According to The New York Times, ''nine states [under GOP control] have passed measures making it harder to vote since the beginning of 2013.''

A country that expands the rights of the powerful to dominate the political process but does not protect fundament rights for all citizens doesn't sound much like a functioning democracy to me.

CBO COST ESTIMATES

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on Monday, the Finance Committee reported S. 2260, the Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency (EXPIRE) Act of 2014, and S. 2261, the Tax Technical Corrections Act of 2014.

At the time that the bills and accompanying reports were filed, the statements of the Congressional Budget Office, required under section 402 of the Budget Act, were not yet available, and, in each case, the committee report indicated that the statements would be provided separately.

I ask unanimous consent to have the CBO statements printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
Chairman, Committee on Finance,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for the Tax Technical Corrections Act of 2014.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Logan Timmerhoff.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS W. ELMENDORF,
Director.

Enclosure.

Tax Technical Corrections Act of 2014

The Tax Technical Corrections Act of 2014 would make various clerical corrections, clarifications, and conforming and other technical changes to the Internal Revenue Code. Those provisions that the bill would modify were originally enacted in a variety of laws, including the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004. In addition, the bill would repeal many elements of the Internal Revenue Code that are not used in computing current taxes and thus are obsolete.

The staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) estimates that the bill would have no budgetary effect. Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

JCT has determined that the bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Logan Timmerhoff. The estimate was approved by David Weiner, Assistant Director for Tax Analysis.

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2014.

Hon. RON WYDEN,
Chairman, Committee on Finance,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for the Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency (EXPIRE) Act.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Barbara Edwards.

Sincerely,

DOUGLAS W. ELMENDORF,
Director.

Enclosure.

Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency (EXPIRE) Act

Summary: The Expiring Provisions Improvement Reform and Efficiency (EXPIRE) Act would reinstate and extend certain expired and expiring tax provisions through December 31, 2015; most of the provisions expired on December 31, 2013, and would be retroactively reinstated, but a few are scheduled to expire on December 31, 2014. In some cases those provisions would be extended and amended. The bill also would make several additional changes to tax law.

The staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation (JCT) estimates that enacting the bill would reduce revenues by about $81.3 billion over the 2014–2024 period. A small portion of those estimated reductions in revenues, less than $0.1 billion over the period from 2014 to 2024, results from off-budget (social security) revenues. CBO and JCT also estimate that the bill would increase direct spending by $2.8 billion over the 2014–2024 period.

On net, JCT and CBO estimate that enacting the bill would increase deficits by about $84.1 billion over the 2014–2024 period. Pay-as-you-go procedures apply because enacting the legislation would affect revenues and direct spending.

JCT has determined that the provisions of the bill contain no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA).

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: The estimated budgetary impacts of the bill are shown in the following table.

	By fiscal year, in billions of dollars—												
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2014–2019	2014–2024
CHANGES IN REVENUES													
Individual Tax Extensions	−1.0	−8.7	−6.5	−0.3	−0.1	−0.1	−0.1	−0.1	−0.1	−0.1	−0.1	−16.6	−17.0
Business Tax Extensions	−21.8	−100.5	−8.1	32.4	20.5	14.4	8.5	3.6	1.4	−0.2	−0.6	−63.1	−50.4
Energy Tax Extensions	−2.0	−3.5	−1.6	−0.5	−1.0	−1.4	−1.7	−1.8	−1.9	−2.0	−2.1	−10.1	−19.6
Debt Collection Contracts	*	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.9	4.8
Other Provisions	*	*	*	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.0
Total Revenues	−24.8	−112.6	−15.8	32.0	20.0	13.6	7.4	2.4	0.1	−1.6	−2.1	−87.6	−81.3
On-budget	−24.8	−112.6	−15.8	32.0	20.0	13.6	7.4	2.4	0.1	−1.6	−2.1	−87.5	−81.3
Off-budget	*	*	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	−0.1	−0.1
CHANGES IN DIRECT SPENDING													
Debt Collection Contracts													
Estimated Budget Authority	*	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.0	2.4
Estimated Outlays	*	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.0	2.4
Rum Excise Tax Payments													
Estimated Budget Authority	0.1	0.2	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3	0.3
Estimated Outlays	0.1	0.2	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3	0.3
Health Coverage Credit													
Estimated Budget Authority	*	0.1	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1
Estimated Outlays	*	0.1	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1
Child Tax Credit													
Estimated Budget Authority	0	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Estimated Outlays	0	0	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Total Direct Spending													
Estimated Budget Authority	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.4	2.8
Estimated Outlays	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.4	2.8
NET INCREASE OR DECREASE (−) IN THE DEFICIT FROM CHANGES IN DIRECT SPENDING AND REVENUES													
Effect on Deficits	25.0	112.9	16.0	−31.8	−19.8	−13.3	−7.1	−2.1	0.2	1.9	2.4	89.0	84.1
On-budget	25.0	112.9	16.0	−31.8	−19.8	−13.3	−7.1	−2.1	0.2	1.9	2.4	88.9	84.1
Off-budget	*	*	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0.1

Sources: Congressional Budget Office and staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation.
Note: Details may not add to totals because of rounding; * = between −$50 million and $50 million.

Basis of estimate: JCT provided the estimates of all provisions except one dealing with outlays of certain rum excise taxes. The estimates reflect an assumed enactment date of July 1, 2014.

Extensions of individual tax provisions: The individual income tax provisions would reduce revenues by $17.0 billion and increase outlays by $0.1 billion over the 2014–2024 period, JCT estimates. Those amounts include, among others, the extension of provisions that allow:

Individuals to claim state and local sales taxes as an itemized deduction in lieu of state and local income taxes in calculating their individual income tax liability; JCT estimates that the revenue reduction would total $6.5 billion over the 2014–2024 period.

An exclusion from gross income for the discharge of indebtedness on a principal residence; JCT estimates that the revenue reduction would be $5.4 billion over the 2014–2024 period.

Individuals to claim the refundable health coverage tax credit, which JCT estimates would reduce revenues by $28 million and increase outlays for refundable tax credits by $106 million over the 2014–2024 period.

Extensions of business tax provisions: The business tax provisions would reduce revenues by $50.4 billion over the 2014–2024 period, JCT estimates. In addition, CBO estimates that outlays would increase by $0.3 billion over the 2014–2024 period. Those amounts include, among others, provisions that allow:

Businesses to qualify for both additional first-year depreciation of 50 percent of the basis for qualifying property and additional expensing (that is, immediate deduction from taxable income) for qualifying property under section 179 of the Internal Revenue Code. JCT estimates that those provisions would reduce revenues by $101.8 billion over the 2014–2015 period, and increase revenues by $95.7 billion over the 2016–2024 period, with the net effect of reducing revenues by $6.0 billion over the 2014–2024 period.

Businesses to claim the research tax credit, which JCT estimates would reduce revenues by $16.0 billion over the 2014–2024 period. The provision would extend the credit in effect in 2013 in modified form.

Certain foreign subsidiaries that engage in banking, financial, and related businesses to defer taxation of certain income until it is repatriated to the U.S. parent corporation; JCT estimates that the provision would reduce revenues by $10.4 billion over the 2014–2024 period.

The Treasuries of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to receive increased payments relating to excise taxes on rum manufactured in those places as well as rum imported from other countries. CBO estimates that those payments, which are recorded in the budget as outlays, would total $336 million over the 2014–2024 period.

Extensions of energy tax provisions: The extension of the energy tax provisions would lower revenues by about $19.6 billion over the 2014–2024 period. The provision with the largest effect on revenues—reducing them by an estimated $13.3 billion over the 2014–2024 period—would extend to the end of 2015, the date by which construction must begin in order for renewable power facilities to be eligible for the electricity production credit or the investment credit in lieu of the production credit.

Debt collection contracts: The bill would require the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to contract with private collection agencies to collect payments of certain tax liabilities. JCT estimates that the provision would increase revenues by $4.8 billion over the period from 2014 to 2024. The IRS would retain up to 25 percent of the amount collected by the private collection agencies to pay for the services of those collection agencies. In addition, up to an additional 25 percent would be retained by the IRS to fund a program of personnel hiring and training related to tax compliance, and to administer the contracts with private collection agencies. As a result, direct spending would increase by $2.4 billion over the 2014–2024 period.

Other provisions: JCT estimates that the remaining provisions in the bill would increase revenues by $1.0 billion over the 2014–2024 period. The provision with the largest effect on revenues would allow the Treasury Department to levy up to 100 percent of a payment to a Medicare provider to collect unpaid taxes; JCT estimates that the provision would increase revenues by $0.8 billion over the 2014–2024 period. JCT also estimates that a provision that would apply penalties to tax preparers who fail to exercise certain due diligence requirements for claims of the refundable child tax credit would reduce outlays for refundable tax credits by $40 million over the 2014–2024 period.

Pay-as-you-go considerations: The Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 establishes budget-reporting and enforcement procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or revenues. The net changes in revenues and outlays that are subject to those pay-as-you-go procedures are shown in the following table. Only on-budget changes to outlays or revenues are subject to pay-as-you-go procedures.

CBO ESTIMATE OF PAY-AS-YOU-GO EFFECTS FOR THE EXPIRING PROVISIONS IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY (EXPIRE) ACT, AS ORDERED REPORTED BY THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE ON APRIL 3, 2014

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—												
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2014–2019	2014–2024
	NET INCREASE OR DECREASE (−) IN THE ON-BUDGET DEFICIT												
Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Effects	24,959	112,872	16,007	−31,824	−19,763	−13,332	−7,137	−2,143	153	1,875	2,388	88,921	84,058
Memorandum:													
Changes in Revenues	−24,797	−112,587	−15,753	32,045	19,994	13,574	7,390	2,408	125	−1,583	−2,083	−87,526	−81,272
Changes in Outlays	162	285	254	221	231	242	253	265	278	292	305	1,395	2,786

Sources: Congressional Budget Office and staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation.

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: JCT has determined that the provisions of the EXPIRE Act contain no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA.

Estimate prepared by: Federal Revenues: Barbara Edwards and staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation Federal Spending: Matthew Pickford

Estimate approved by: David Weiner, Assistant Director for Tax Analysis.

TRIBUTE TO GABRIELLE BATKIN

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Gabrielle Batkin on the occasion of her becoming the staff director of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

Gabrielle has a long career in public service. She served in Senator Frank Lautenburg's office, in Congressman PALLONE's office, on the Senate Budget Committee, and joined my office in 2001. Gabrielle started on the Appropriations Committee's Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee, then moved to the Commerce, Justice, and Science Subcommittee, eventually becoming the clerk of the subcommittee. For the last year she has been the deputy director of the Appropriations Committee.

Gabby has played a part in some of my biggest achievements, including the most recent passage of the Appropriations Omnibus Package for Fiscal Year 2014. Her expertise and service ensured that America was well-funded and ready to get back to work after sequester and shutdown.

Throughout these wonderful 13 years, Gabrielle has been an invaluable member of my staff. Not only has she helped me immensely in my work as a U.S. Senator, but she has served the people of Maryland with distinction. Today I want to thank Gabrielle, her husband Josh, and her three wonderful children Henry, Will, and Charlie, for sharing her with us. I want to recognize her for all of the important work she has done and wish her the very best as she embarks on the next stage in her career.

COMBATING GLOBAL HUNGER

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I would like to discuss global hunger. From April 28 to May 2, people across the United States and across the globe are participating in the Live Below the Line campaign to raise awareness for global hunger and to show support for the critical programs that seek to alleviate hunger. Participants in the Live Below the Line campaign, including many of my constituents in Maryland, are subsisting on $1.50 a day to demonstrate the challenges faced by millions of people each day. Right now, more than 1.2 billion people involuntarily live on less than $1.50 a day for food and drink.

Children are particularly vulnerable to hunger and undernourishment. Studies show a child's entire life is shaped by whether or not she or he receives proper nutrition during the first 1,000 days of her or his life. And tragically, 3.1 million children under the age of 5 die each year as a result of poor nutrition and hunger.

When we think of global hunger, we often think of Sub-Saharan Africa where 223 million people, 24.8 percent of the population, face food insecurity. Or we think of Asia, where more than 500

million people suffer from hunger. In Laos, for example, 50 percent of children under the age of 5 are chronically malnourished. And in Burma, it is estimated that about 35 percent of children are undernourished and stunted.

But hunger is not just a problem for developing countries. Families across America and in my home State of Maryland are also struggling. According to the latest U.S. department of Agriculture report on Household Food Security in the United States, 12.5 percent of all households in Maryland were food insecure between 2009 and 2011, and more than 27 percent of children in Maryland are living in poverty.

Proper nutrition is not just important to individual health, it is critical to the long-term health and success of nations. Poor nutrition and rampant hunger results in a less healthy and less productive workforce, hampers economic development and growth, and ultimately perpetuates the cycle of hunger and poverty for successive generations. It should not be that way; every child should have the opportunity to grow up healthy and strong.

Thanks to organizations like the World Food Program USA and the United Nations World Food Program, who together work to solve global hunger, the number of hungry people in the world has fallen by 17 percent since 1990. And in 2013, the World Food Program provided 24 million school children in 60 different countries with meals at school. This not only reduces undernourishment and hunger, but also incentivizes school attendance. We need more programs like this, and we need more people to be aware of this issue, both here in the United States and abroad.

With the world population expected to increase to 9 billion by 2050, transforming how people farm and what people eat is the only way, I believe, to ensure food security for future generations.

We are making great strides in global food security, particularly through the U.S. Feed The Future Initiative, which focuses on building sustainability and resilience into communities by transforming how people farm and what people eat.

In 2009, then-Secretary of State Clinton said,

> We have the resources to give every person in the world the tools they need to feed themselves and their children. So the question is not whether we can end hunger. It's whether we will.

Ending global hunger and poverty will not happen tomorrow, but if we continue to coordinate with our global partners, harness the power of the private sector and the NGO community, and use our development aid in the most effective and transparent way possible, we will have much better outcomes. The United States must be relentless in striving to assure that no one goes hungry.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO TONY ZEISS

• Mrs. HAGAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize a friend of education, a passionate champion for job creation and innovation, and a truly outstanding leader from North Carolina.

Dr. Tony Zeiss has served as the president of Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, NC, since 1992. CPCC is an institution familiar to many of my colleagues in this body. In January 2012, during his State of the Union Address, the President held up the partnership between CPCC and Siemens Energy as a model of customized training for workforce development. Central Piedmont Community College was also selected as the 2002 Community College of the Year by the National Alliance of Business.

The community college's success is due, in large part, to Dr. Zeiss's leadership and commitment to fostering innovation in workforce and career development.

Dr. Zeiss is a native of Indiana and a proud alumnus of Indiana State University, where he earned his bachelor's and master's degrees. He received his doctorate degree in community college administration from Nova Southeastern University.

Dr. Zeiss is passionate about his adopted home State of North Carolina and the importance of making a difference in his community. He has served on several local, regional, and national boards. He is the past chair of the board of the American Association of Community Colleges, past board chair for the League for Innovation, and was the Association of Community College Trustees' National Chief Executive Officer of the year for 2004–2005.

While it is evident he is deeply engaged in his community, the true sources of strength for Dr. Zeiss are his wife Beth, his two sons, his daughter-in-law, and his two grandchildren.

One of the first opportunities Dr. Zeiss sought out when he arrived in North Carolina was participation in Leadership North Carolina, a nonprofit organization that engages current and emerging leaders from across the State through ongoing networking and service opportunities. In 1995, Dr. Zeiss graduated from Leadership North Carolina as an alumnus of Class I. In 2005, the LNC board of directors recognized his contributions to the State by presenting him with the L. Richardson Preyer Alumni Award, presented annually to an LNC alumnus whose demonstrated leadership has made a significant improvement in the quality of life, economic well-being, and/or sense of community in our State.

Elected as chair of Leadership North Carolina in 2012, Dr. Zeiss has brought his considerable leadership experience and passion as an alumnus to strengthen the organization during his 2-year tenure. His work has positioned the program for sustainability for years to come and strengthened its reputation among leaders in business, government, education, and the nonprofit sector. The measure of a good leader is the legacy he or she leaves behind. Dr. Tony Zeiss leaves North Carolina with 950 informed and engaged leaders and has challenged them to leverage their influence for the benefit of our State and Nation.

On June 30 of this year, Dr. Tony Zeiss will complete his tenure as chair of the Leadership North Carolina board of directors. We need strong, effective, visionary leaders now more than ever. Dr. Zeiss's service to Leadership North Carolina has been focused on promoting the LNC program and soliciting financial support for its sustainability and growth, all while engaging, challenging, and informing future leaders. I join the board of directors of Leadership North Carolina in recognizing Dr. Zeiss for his leadership, vision, and determination.

As a fellow parent and grandparent, I am grateful for the example Dr. Zeiss has set for young people and the opportunities he has provided through the gifts of education and leadership. He is the embodiment of our State's motto, Esse Quam Videri, to be rather than to seem, and I ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking Dr. Tony Zeiss for his service to North Carolina.•

FREMONT COUNTY, IOWA

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, the strength of my State of Iowa lies in its vibrant local communities, where citizens come together to foster economic development, make smart investments to expand opportunity, and take the initiative to improve the health and well-being of residents. Over the decades, I have witnessed the growth and revitalization of so many communities across my State, and it has been deeply gratifying to see how my work in Congress has supported these local efforts.

I have always believed in accountability for public officials, and this, my final year in the Senate, is an appropriate time to give an accounting of my work across four decades representing Iowa in Congress. I take pride in accomplishments that have been national in scope—for instance, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act and spearheading successful farm bills. But I take a very special pride in projects that have made a big difference in local communities across my State.

Today, I would like to give an accounting of my work with leaders and residents of Fremont County to build a legacy of a stronger local economy, better schools and educational opportunities and a healthier, safer community

Between 2001 and 2013, the creative leadership in your community has worked with me to secure funding in Fremont County worth over $155,000 and successfully acquired financial assistance from programs I have fought

hard to support, which have provided more than $4.4 million to the local economy.

Of course my favorite memory of working together has to be Fremont County's excellent work to secure funding for firefighting equipment through Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, fire grants. I look forward to seeing how Fremont County has implemented this important funding in their community.

Among the highlights:

Keeping Iowa communities safe: I also firmly believe that our first responders need to be appropriately trained and equipped, able to respond to both local emergencies and to statewide challenges such as—for instance, the methamphetamine epidemic. Since 2001, Fremont County's fire departments have received over $896,975 for firefighter safety and operations equipment.

Investing in Iowa's economic development through targeted community projects: In Southeast Iowa, we have worked together to grow the economy by making targeted investments in important economic development projects including improved roads and bridges, modernized sewer and water systems, and better housing options for residents of Fremont County. In many cases, I have secured Federal funding that has leveraged local investments and served as a catalyst for a whole ripple effect of positive, creative changes. I have fought for funding for affordable housing programs through the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which local economic development officials have successfully won over many years, securing over $475,000 and helping to create jobs and expand economic opportunities in Fremont County.

School grants: Every child in Iowa deserves to be educated in a classroom that is safe, accessible, and modern. That is why, for the past decade and a half, I have secured funding for the innovative Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program—better known among educators in Iowa as Harkin Grants for public schools construction and renovation. Across 15 years, Harkin grants worth more than $132 million have helped school districts to fund a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools. In many cases, these Federal dollars have served as the needed incentive to leverage local public and private dollars, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect within a school district. Over the years, Fremont County has received $150,000 in Harkin grants. Similarly, schools in Fremont County have received funds that I designated for Iowa Star Schools for technology totaling $47,400.

Agricultural and rural development: Because I grew up in a small town in rural Iowa, I have always been a loyal friend and fierce advocate for family farmers and rural communities. I have been a member of the House or Senate Agriculture Committee for 40 years—including more than 10 years as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Across the decades, I have championed farm policies for Iowans that include effective farm income protection and commodity programs; strong, progressive conservation assistance for agricultural producers; renewable energy opportunities; and robust economic development in our rural communities. Since 1991, through various programs authorized through the farm bill, Fremont County has received more than $2.6 million from a variety of farm bill programs.

Disability rights: Growing up, I loved and admired my brother Frank, who was deaf. But I was deeply disturbed by the discrimination and obstacles he faced every day. That is why I have always been a passionate advocate for full equality for people with disabilities. As the primary author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, and the ADA Amendments Act, I have had four guiding goals for our fellow citizens with disabilities: equal opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Nearly a quarter century since passage of the ADA, I see remarkable changes in communities everywhere I go in Iowa—not just in curb cuts or closed-captioned television but in the full participation of people with disabilities in our society and economy, folks who at long last have the opportunity to contribute their talents and to be fully included. These changes have increased economic opportunities for all citizens of Fremont County, both those with and without disabilities, and they make us proud to be a part of a community and country that respects the worth and civil rights of all of our citizens.

This is at least a partial accounting of my work on behalf of Iowa, and specifically Fremont County, during my time in Congress. In every case, this work has been about partnerships, cooperation, and empowering folks at the State and local level, including in Fremont County, to fulfill their own dreams and initiatives, and, of course, this work is never complete. Even after I retire from the Senate, I have no intention of retiring from the fight for a better, fairer, richer Iowa, and I will always be profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Iowa as their Senator.•

SHELBY COUNTY, IOWA

• Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, the strength of my State of Iowa lies in its vibrant local communities, where citizens come together to foster economic development, make smart investments to expand opportunity, and take the initiative to improve the health and well-being of residents. Over the decades, I have witnessed the growth and revitalization of so many communities across my State. And it has been deeply gratifying to see how my work in Congress has supported these local efforts.

I have always believed in accountability for public officials, and this, my final year in the Senate, is an appropriate time to give an accounting of my work across four decades representing Iowa in Congress. I take pride in accomplishments that have been national in scope—for instance, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act and spearheading successful farm bills. But I take a very special pride in projects that have made a big difference in local communities across my State.

Today, I would like to give an accounting of my work with leaders and residents of Shelby County to build a legacy of a stronger local economy, better schools and educational opportunities, and a healthier, safer community.

Between 2001 and 2013, the creative leadership in your community has worked with me to secure funding in Shelby County worth over $544,000 and successfully acquired financial assistance from programs I have fought hard to support, which have provided more than $8.4 million to the local economy.

Of course my favorite memory of working together has to be early in my career when I helped Elk Horn to cut through the bureaucratic red tape holding its historical Danish windmill at customs in New York due to import levies. I also worked with community leaders to see that they received a refund of that levy. Soon after, I spent one of my work days helping the people of the community to rebuild it as a bicentennial project. The windmill stood on Danish soil for 127 years before it was purchased by the Elk Horn community. I am pleased that my state staff director, Rob Barron, will be revisiting this site exactly 38 years after my workday on May 1, 1976.

Among the highlights:

School grants: Every child in Iowa deserves to be educated in a classroom that is safe, accessible, and modern. That is why, for the past decade and a half, I have secured funding for the innovative Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program—better known among educators in Iowa as Harkin Grants—for public schools construction and renovation. Across 15 years, Harkin grants worth more than $132 million have helped school districts to fund a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools. In many cases, these Federal dollars have served as the needed incentive to leverage local public and private dollars, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect within a school district. Over the years, Shelby County has received $391,730 in Harkin Grants. Similarly, schools in Shelby County have received funds that I designated for Iowa Star Schools for technology totaling $20,000.

Agricultural and rural development: Because I grew up in a small town in

rural Iowa, I have always been a loyal friend and fierce advocate for family farmers and rural communities. I have been a member of the House or Senate Agriculture Committee for 40 years—including more than 10 years as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Across the decades, I have championed farm policies for Iowans that include effective farm income protection and commodity programs; strong, progressive conservation assistance for agricultural producers; renewable energy opportunities; and robust economic development in our rural communities. Since 1991, through various programs authorized through the farm bill, Shelby County has received more than $2.1 million from a variety of farm bill programs.

Wellness and health care: Improving the health and wellness of all Americans has been something I have been passionate about for decades. That is why I fought to dramatically increase funding for disease prevention, innovative medical research, and a whole range of initiatives to improve the health of individuals and families not only at the doctor's office but also in our communities, schools, and workplaces. I am so proud that Americans have better access to clinical preventive services, nutritious food, smoke-free environments, safe places to engage in physical activity, and information to make healthy decisions for themselves and their families. These efforts not only save lives, they will also save money for generations to come thanks to the prevention of costly chronic diseases, which account for a whopping 75 percent of annual health care costs. I am pleased that with the help of community leaders like Sheri Bowen with the public health department, Shelby County has recognized this important issue by securing $162,500 for wellness grants and through direct appropriations for mental health services for distressed farmers.

Disability rights: Growing up, I loved and admired my brother Frank, who was deaf. But I was deeply disturbed by the discrimination and obstacles he faced every day. That is why I have always been a passionate advocate for full equality for people with disabilities. As the primary author of the Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, and the ADA Amendments Act, I have had four guiding goals for our fellow citizens with disabilities: equal opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency. Nearly a quarter century since passage of the ADA, I see remarkable changes in communities everywhere I go in Iowa—not just in curb cuts or closed captioned television but in the full participation of people with disabilities in our society and economy, folks who at long last have the opportunity to contribute their talents and to be fully included. These changes have increased economic opportunities for all citizens of Shelby County, both those with and without disabilities. And they make us proud to be a part of a community and country that respects the worth and civil rights of all of our citizens.

This is at least a partial accounting of my work on behalf of Iowa, and specifically Shelby County, during my time in Congress. In every case, this work has been about partnerships, cooperation, and empowering folks at the State and local level, including in Shelby County, to fulfill their own dreams and initiatives. And, of course, this work is never complete. Even after I retire from the Senate, I have no intention of retiring from the fight for a better, fairer, richer Iowa. And I will always be profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Iowa as their Senator.●

TRIBUTE TO SARAH JOHNSON

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Sarah Johnson, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all the hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota.

Sarah is a graduate of Custer High School in Custer, SD. Currently, she is attending South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, where she is majoring in mining engineering. She is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of her experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Sarah for all of the fine work she has done and wish her continued success in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO MEGAN ASSMAN

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Megan Assman, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all the hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota.

Megan is a graduate of Winner High School in Winner, SD. Currently, she is attending South Dakota State University, where she is majoring in political science. She is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of her experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Megan for all of the fine work she has done and wish her continued success in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO JENNESSA SCHOLL

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Jennessa Scholl, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all the hard work she has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota.

Jennessa is a graduate of Spearfish High School in Spearfish, SD. Currently, she is also a graduate of Black Hills State University, where she majored in mass communications. She is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of her experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Jennessa for all of the fine work she has done and wish her continued success in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO ADAM WEK

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Adam Wek, an intern in my Washington, DC, office, for all the hard work he has done for me, my staff, and the State of South Dakota.

Adam is a graduate of Roosevelt High School in Sioux Falls, SD. Currently, he is attending South Dakota State University, where he is majoring in political science. He is a hard worker who has been dedicated to getting the most out of his experience.

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Adam for all of the fine work he has done and wish him continued success in the years to come.●

TRIBUTE TO DAVID JENSEN

● Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Mr. David Jensen, a native of Lemmon, SD, for being awarded the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Defense Medal for Valor. The Medal for Valor is the highest civilian award for valor, and David received this honor for his actions while deployed in Afghanistan on September 10, 2012. He was recognized for his bravery in an awards ceremony at the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on April 14, 2014.

David served in the 75th Ranger Regiment and the U.S. Army Special Operations Command before he was honorably discharged. He is now a special operations task force advisor at Fort Bragg, NC, working for the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization.

David has also worked as a contractor for Wexford Group Inc., serving with the U.S. Army Asymmetric Warfare Group. In 2012, David was deployed to Afghanistan as an operational adviser for the Asymmetric Warfare Group alongside Company C, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. On September 10, 2012, David and Company C were set to fly out of Bagram Airfield with Afghan National Security Forces to conduct a partnered air assault operation in Parwan Province. During preflight operations, however, one of the CH–47 Chinook helicopters was struck by an enemy rocket, igniting the fuel tanks of the aircraft. Despite the high risk of danger and personal harm, David immediately began evacuating wounded soldiers from the burning aircraft, making several trips before the flames overcame the entire aircraft. After evacuating four wounded soldiers from the wreckage, David promptly began administering medical attention to the injured. A humble man, David has said that he merely reacted, doing what needed to be done.

David Jensen is most deserving of the Medal for Valor for his exemplary bravery in the face of danger and putting the concerns of others before his own. His selfless acts saved the lives of his

colleagues, and our Nation will always be grateful for his dedicated service. As thankful citizens, we must never take for granted the courage of heroes like David who selflessly answer the call to duty.●

TRIBUTE TO JOSE ELGUEZABAL

● Mr. WALSH. Mr. President, I wish to honor Jose Elguezabal, a veteran of the U.S. Army.

It is my honor to share the story of Jose's service, because no veteran's story should ever go unrecognized.

Jose was born in Eagle Pass, TX, and served our Nation during World War II. Unfortunately, most of the records of his service were destroyed in the fire at the National Personnel Records Center in 1973.

Jose told his daughter Anna how his platoon came under fire, killing every member but Jose. Jose was captured by enemy forces and spent 6 months as a prisoner of war in France.

When Jose returned home, he and his wife of 63 years had 10 children—9 girls and 1 boy. His children said he was a great father and a true patriot who flew an American flag and a Prisoner of War flag outside of his house every day until he passed away.

His family pieced Jose's military service record together to finally track down the medals Jose earned through his service.

We were joined by Jose's daughter Anna and her husband John, who recently retired after spending 40 years serving Malmstrom Air Force Base as a firefighter.

It was my honor, along with the commanding officer at Malmstrom Air Force Base, Col. Robert Stanley, to present to Anna the medals that long ago should have been presented to her father: The Bronze Star Medal, Good Conduct Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal & Bronze Star Attachment, WWII Victory Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, Honorable Service Lapel Button, and Marksman Badge & Rifle Bar.

These decorations are important tokens of Jose's heroism. But these decorations are also powerful reminders that we should never let a veteran's service go forgotten.

These medals were presented on behalf of a grateful nation.●

TRIBUTE TO JOHN ROBERT VIERECK

● Mr. WALSH. Mr. President, I wish to honor John Robert Viereck, a U.S. Army veteran from World War II.

It is my honor to share the story of John's service, because no veteran's story should ever go unrecognized.

John was born in Wilmington, CA, in 1924.

John's father loved the sea and encouraged his son to join the Merchant Marines. John joined up but was so seasick after his first trip that his career in the Merchant Marines came to an end.

On July 8, 1942, John enlisted in the U.S. Army.

John was a radioman and cryptographer for the Big Red One—the Army's First Infantry Division, Antitank Company, 26th Infantry Regiment.

He served in Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily, England, France, Belgium, Germany, and Czechoslovakia.

John served in seven campaigns, including the Battle of the Bulge, and spent a total of 31 months in Europe and Africa.

When John returned home to the United States in 1943, he was diagnosed with shell shock, something we know today as post-traumatic stress disorder.

After World War II, John attended the Frank Wiggins Trade School to study TV and radio. John bought his first TV in the late 1940s and his daughter Fran remembers that from then on the Viereck household always had a TV.

John worked as a truck driver in Wilmington, as a taxi driver in Gardena, and then as a Zamboni operator in Torrance, CA. He was also a ham radio operator.

Weather, politics, war, and the military have been lifelong topics of interest to him.

John moved to Helena in 2003 to be closer to his daughter.

In the presence of John's family, it was my honor to present to him the Bronze Star Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster; the Good Conduct Medal; the American Campaign Medal; the European-African-Middle Eastern, EAME, Campaign Medal, with 4 bronze stars, meaning he served in four of these campaigns; the WW II Victory Medal; and the Honorable Service Lapel Button.

The medals are a small token but they are a powerful symbol of service and sacrifice.

These medals were presented on behalf of a grateful nation.●

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

At 12:30 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bill:

S. 994. An act to expand the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 to increase accountability and transparency in Federal spending, and for other purposes.

The bill was subsequently signed by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

At 12:54 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Novotny, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 627. An act to provide for the issuance of coins to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the National Park Service, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4167. An act to amend section 13 of the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956, known as the Volcker Rule, to exclude certain debt securities of collateralized loan obligations from the prohibition against acquiring or retaining an ownership interest in a hedge fund or private equity fund.

H.R. 4414. An act to clarify the treatment under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of health plans in which expatriates are the primary enrollees, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4488. An act to make technical corrections to two bills enabling the presentation of congressional gold medals, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 627. An act to provide for the issuance of coins to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the National Park Service, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

H.R. 4167. An act to amend section 13 of the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956, known as the Volcker Rule, to exclude certain debt securities of collateralized loan obligations from the prohibition against acquiring or retaining an ownership interest in a hedge fund or private equity fund; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

ENROLLED BILL PRESENTED

The Secretary of the Senate reported that on today, April 30, 2014, she had presented to the President of the United States the following enrolled bill:

S. 994. An act to expand the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 to increase accountability and transparency in Federal spending, and for other purposes.

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–5423. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13–134); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5424. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13–180); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5425. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–006); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5426. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–022); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5427. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–029); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5428. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–036); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5429. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13–148); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5430. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–009); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5431. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–002); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5432. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13–193); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5433. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 14–008); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5434. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to section 36(d) of the Arms Export Control Act (DDTC 13–173); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5435. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the status of the Government of Cuba's compliance with the United States-Cuba September 1994 ''Joint Communique'' and on the treatment of persons returned to Cuba in accordance with the United States-Cuba May 1995 ''Joint Statement''; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5436. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 1002 (P.L. 107–243) and the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (P.L. 102–1) for the December 17, 2013–February 14, 2014 reporting period; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5437. A communication from the Secretary of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the export to the People's Republic of China of items not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5438. A communication from the Acting Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, the 2013 annual report on voting practices in the United Nations; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5439. A communication from the Assistant Legal Adviser for Treaty Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to the Case-Zablocki Act, 1 U.S.C. 112b, as amended, the report of the texts and background statements of international agreements, other than treaties (List 2014–0034—2014–0048); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5440. A communication from the Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, transmitting, pursuant to law, an addendum to a certification, of the proposed sale or export of defense articles and/or defense services to a Middle East country regarding any possible affects such a sale might have relating to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge over military threats to Israel (OSS–2014–0551); to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

EC–5441. A communication from the Director of Legislative Affairs, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office's fiscal year 2013 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5442. A communication from the Diversity and Inclusion Programs Director, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's fiscal year 2013 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5443. A communication from the Director of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Corporation's fiscal year 2013 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5444. A communication from the Staff Director, Federal Election Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2013 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5445. A communication from the Acting Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2013 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5446. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Department of Transportation's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5447. A communication from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Commission's fiscal year 2012 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5448. A communication from the General Counsel, Government Accountability Office, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Office's fiscal year 2013 annual report relative to the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act); to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5449. A communication from the Director, Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Readiness and Force Management), transmitting, pursuant to law, a compilation of fiscal year 2013 reports from the Department of Defense Components relative to the implementation of the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5450. A communication from the Chief Judge, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the District of Columbia Family Court Act; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5451. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel, Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Administrative Wage Garnishment'' (5 CFR Part 1639) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 23, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5452. A communication from the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the cost of response and recovery efforts for FEMA–3368–EM in the State of Georgia having exceeded the $5,000,000 limit for a single emergency declaration; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5453. A communication from the Senior Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisition Policy, General Services Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''General Services Administration Acquisition Regulation; Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) and Sales Reporting'' (RIN3090–AJ36) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 21, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5454. A communication from the Director, Office of Personnel Management, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Solicitation of Federal Civilian and Uniformed Service Personnel for Contributions to Private Voluntary Organizations'' (RIN3206–AM68) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5455. A communication from the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled ''U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Met Many Requirements of the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 but Did Not Fully Comply for Fiscal Year 2013''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5456. A communication from the Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Administration's Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2014 through 2018; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5457. A communication from the Chairman, National Mediation Board, transmitting, pursuant to law, the Board's Annual Performance and Accountability Report for fiscal year 2013; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5458. A communication from the District of Columbia Auditor, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report entitled, ''Certification of Fiscal Year 2014 Total Local Source General Fund Revenues (Net of Dedicated Taxes) in Support of the District's Issuance of $495,425,000 in General Obligation Bonds (Series 2013A)''; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5459. A communication from the Acting Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Suspension of Community Eligibility'' (Docket No. FEMA–2013–0002) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 22, 2014; to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.

EC–5460. A communication from the General Counsel, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Premium Rates; Payment of Premiums; Reducing Regulatory Burden'' (RIN1212–AB26) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 15, 2014; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–5461. A communication from the Secretary of Health and Human Services, transmitting, pursuant to law, an annual report on mining activities as required by the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act of 2006; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

EC–5462. A communication from the Director of the Division of Coal Mine Workers' Compensation, Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, Department of Labor, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Black Lung Benefits Act: Standards for Chest Radiographs'' (RIN1240–AA07) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on April 17, 2014; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. MURPHY (for himself and Mr. BLUMENTHAL):

S. 2271. A bill to establish the Green Bank to assist in the financing of qualified clean energy projects and qualified energy efficiency projects; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. BURR (for himself and Mr. MANCHIN):

S. 2272. A bill to prohibit discretionary bonuses for employees of the Internal Revenue Service who have engaged in misconduct or who have delinquent tax liability; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. UDALL of Colorado:

S. 2273. A bill to improve energy savings by the Department of Defense, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Armed Services.

By Mr. UDALL of Colorado (for himself, Mr. BEGICH, and Ms. HEITKAMP):

S. 2274. A bill to expedite decisions on applications for authorization to export natural gas, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mrs. MCCASKILL (for herself and Mr. BLUNT):

S. Res. 430. A resolution expressing support for the designation of May 1, 2014, as ''Silver Star Service Banner Day''; considered and agreed to.

By Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. WARNER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mrs. HAGAN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. WARREN, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. CARDIN, and Ms. HIRONO):

S. Res. 431. A resolution honoring military children during the National Month of the Military Child; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 315

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. PRYOR) was added as a cosponsor of S. 315, a bill to reauthorize and extend the Paul D. Wellstone Muscular Dystrophy Community Assistance, Research, and Education Amendments of 2008.

S. 375

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 375, a bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

S. 398

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 398, a bill to establish the Commission to Study the Potential Creation of a National Women's History Museum, and for other purposes.

S. 445

At the request of Mr. FRANKEN, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 445, a bill to improve security at State and local courthouses.

S. 541

At the request of Ms. LANDRIEU, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 541, a bill to prevent human health threats posed by the consumption of equines raised in the United States.

S. 635

At the request of Mr. BROWN, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 635, a bill to amend the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act to provide an exception to the annual written privacy notice requirement.

S. 1066

At the request of Mrs. GILLIBRAND, the name of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1066, a bill to allow certain student loan borrowers to refinance Federal student loans.

S. 1141

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1141, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the rehabilitation credit, and for other purposes.

S. 1187

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. SCHATZ) and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. BLUMENTHAL) were added as cosponsors of S. 1187, a bill to prevent homeowners from being forced to pay taxes on forgiven mortgage loan debt.

S. 1410

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1410, a bill to focus limited Federal resources on the most serious offenders.

S. 1725

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. CASEY) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1725, a bill to amend the Securities Investor Protection Act of 1970 to confirm that a customer's net equity claim is based on the customer's last statement and that certain recoveries are prohibited, to change how trustees are appointed, and for other purposes.

S. 1733

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the names of the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) were added as cosponsors of S. 1733, a bill to stop exploitation through trafficking.

S. 1837

At the request of Ms. WARREN, the names of the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) and the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) were added as cosponsors of S. 1837, a bill to amend the Fair Credit Reporting Act to prohibit the use of consumer credit checks against prospective and current employees for the purposes of making adverse employment decisions.

S. 1862

At the request of Mr. BLUNT, the names of the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Indiana (Mr. COATS), the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS), the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO), the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Iowa (Mr. GRASSLEY), the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. ROBERTS), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SESSIONS), the Senator from Alabama (Mr. SHELBY), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. WICKER), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. WYDEN) and the Senator from Virginia

(Mr. WARNER) were added as cosponsors of S. 1862, a bill to grant the Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the Monuments Men, in recognition of their heroic role in the preservation, protection, and restitution of monuments, works of art, and artifacts of cultural importance during and following World War II.

S. 1881

At the request of Mr. MENENDEZ, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1881, a bill to expand sanctions imposed with respect to Iran and to impose additional sanctions with respect to Iran, and for other purposes.

S. 2013

At the request of Mr. RUBIO, the name of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2013, a bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the removal of Senior Executive Service employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs for performance, and for other purposes.

S. 2024

At the request of Mr. CRUZ, the name of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2024, a bill to amend chapter 1 of title 1, United States Code, with regard to the definition of ''marriage'' and ''spouse'' for Federal purposes and to ensure respect for State regulation of marriage.

S. 2080

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Alaska (Mr. BEGICH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2080, a bill to conserve fish and aquatic communities in the United States through partnerships that foster fish habitat conservation, improve the quality of life for the people of the United States, enhance fish and wildlife-dependent recreation, and for other purposes.

S. 2126

At the request of Mrs. BOXER, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Ms. LANDRIEU) and the Senator from Wisconsin (Ms. BALDWIN) were added as cosponsors of S. 2126, a bill to launch a national strategy to support regenerative medicine through the establishment of a Regenerative Medicine Coordinating Council, and for other purposes.

S. 2231

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2231, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to provide an individual with a mental health assessment before the individual enlists in the Armed Forces or is commissioned as an officer in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

S. 2235

At the request of Mr. CARDIN, the name of the Senator from Maryland (Ms. MIKULSKI) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2235, a bill to secure the Federal voting rights of persons when released from incarceration.

S. 2250

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2250, a bill to extend the Travel Promotion Act of 2009, and for other purposes.

S. 2252

At the request of Mr. VITTER, the name of the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2252, a bill to reaffirm the importance of community banking and community banking regulatory experience on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, to ensure that the Federal Reserve Board of Governors has a member who has previous experience in community banking or community banking supervision, and for other purposes.

S. 2263

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Nebraska (Mrs. FISCHER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2263, a bill to appropriately limit the authority to award bonuses to employees.

S. 2270

At the request of Ms. COLLINS, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2270, a bill to clarify the application of certain leverage and risk-based requirements under the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

S.J. RES. 19

At the request of Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, the name of the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) was added as a cosponsor of S.J. Res. 19, a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to contributions and expenditures intended to affect elections.

S. RES. 417

At the request of Mr. UDALL of Colorado, the name of the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 417, a resolution designating October 30, 2014, as a national day of remembrance for nuclear weapons program workers.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 430—EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE DESIGNATION OF MAY 1, 2014, AS ''SILVER STAR SERVICE BANNER DAY''

Mrs. MCCASKILL (for herself and Mr. BLUNT) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 430

Whereas the Senate has always honored the sacrifices made by the wounded and ill members of the Armed Forces;

Whereas the Silver Star Service Banner has come to represent the members of the Armed Forces and veterans who were wounded or became ill in combat in the wars fought by the United States;

Whereas the Silver Star Families of America was formed to help the American people remember the sacrifices made by the wounded and ill members of the Armed Forces by designing and manufacturing Silver Star Service Banners and Silver Star Flags for that purpose;

Whereas the sole mission of the Silver Star Families of America is to evoke memories of the sacrifices of members and veterans of the Armed Forces on behalf of the United States through the presence of a Silver Star Service Banner in a window or a Silver Star Flag flying;

Whereas the sacrifices of members and veterans of the Armed Forces on behalf of the United States should never be forgotten; and

Whereas May 1, 2014, is an appropriate date to designate as ''Silver Star Service Banner Day'': Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate supports the designation of May 1, 2014, as ''Silver Star Service Banner Day'' and calls upon the people of the United States to observe the day with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

SENATE RESOLUTION 431—HONORING MILITARY CHILDREN DURING THE NATIONAL MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

Mrs. MURRAY (for herself, Ms. AYOTTE, Mr. WARNER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mrs. HAGAN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. SCHATZ, Ms. WARREN, Ms. CANTWELL, Mr. CARDIN, and Ms. HIRONO) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 431

Whereas more than 2,200,000 individuals demonstrate courage and commitment to freedom by serving in the Armed Forces of the United States;

Whereas 43.5 percent of members of the Armed Forces, when deployed away from their permanent duty stations, leave behind families with children;

Whereas no one feels the effect of deployments more than the children of deployed members of the Armed Forces;

Whereas as of March 2014, more than 52,000 children have had a military parent wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation Enduring Freedom;

Whereas the daily struggles and personal sacrifices of children of members of the Armed Forces are too often unnoticed;

Whereas countless children live with a parent who is a member of the Armed Forces and who bears a visible or invisible wound of war;

Whereas the children of members of the Armed Forces are a source of pride and honor to the people of the United States, and it is fitting that the United States recognize the contributions of such children and celebrate the spirit of such children;

Whereas the National Month of the Military Child, observed in April of each year, recognizes military children for their sacrifices and contributes to demonstrating the unconditional support of the United States for members of the Armed Forces;

Whereas in addition to programs of the Department of Defense to support military families and military children, various programs and campaigns have been established in the private sector to honor, support, and thank military children by fostering awareness and appreciation for the sacrifices and the challenges that such children face; and

Whereas a month-long salute to military children encourages support for the organizations and campaigns established to provide direct support for military children and families: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) joins the Secretary of Defense in honoring the children of members of the Armed Forces and recognizes that such children share in the burden of protecting the United States; and

(2) urges the people of the United States to join the military community in observing the National Month of the Military Child with appropriate ceremonies and activities that honor, support, and thank military children.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, at 2:30 p.m. in room SR–253 of the Russell Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled, ''Transportation Security Administration Oversight: Confronting America's Transportation Security Challenges.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, at 10:30 a.m., to hold a Near Eastern and Southern and Central Asian Affairs Subcommittee hearing entitled, ''A Transformation: Afghanistan Beyond 2014.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, at 10 a.m. to conduct a hearing entitled ''Lessons Learned from the Boston Marathon Bombings: Improving Intelligence and Information Sharing.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, in room SD–628 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on April 30, 2014, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Oversight of the Drug Enforcement Administration.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Rules and Administration be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, at 10 a.m., in room SH–216 of the Hart Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Dollars and Sense: How Undisclosed Money and Post-McCutcheon Campaign Finance Will Affect the 2014 Election and Beyond.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, at 10 a.m. in room SR–418 of the Russell Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Overmedication: Problems and Solutions.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Special Committee on Aging be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on April 30, 2014, in room SD–562 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building at 2:15 p.m. to conduct a hearing entitled ''Exploring the Perils of the Precious Metals Market.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SILVER STAR SERVICE BANNER DAY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to S. Res. 430, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 430) expressing support for the designation of May 1, 2014, as ''Silver Star Service Banner Day''.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 430) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

NATIONAL MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 431, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 431) honoring military children during the National Month of the Military Child.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 431) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under ''Submitted Resolutions.'')

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2014

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business tonight, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow morning, May 1; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following any leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business until 11:15 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that at 11:15 a.m. the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 591, 592, and 575, with all other provisions of the previous order remaining in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there will be a series of votes at 11:15 a.m. tomorrow and another series at 1:45 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M TOMORROW

Mr. REID. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:46 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, May 1, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate April 30, 2014:

THE JUDICIARY

SHERYL H. LIPMAN, OF TENNESSEE, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE.

STANLEY ALLEN BASTIAN, OF WASHINGTON, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON.

MANISH S. SHAH, OF ILLINOIS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS.

DANIEL D. CRABTREE, OF KANSAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS.

CYNTHIA ANN BASHANT, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA.

JON DAVID LEVY, OF MAINE, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF MAINE.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

ROBERT O. WORK, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL DAY OF REASON

HON. MICHAEL M. HONDA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Thursday, May 1, 2014 as the National Day of Reason.

The National Day of Reason celebrates the application of reason and the positive impact it has had on humanity. It is also an opportunity to reaffirm the Constitutional separation of religion and government.

Each day, scientists and engineers in my Silicon Valley district are developing innovative new technologies through the use of the scientific method and the application of reason. Such advances throughout history have offered hope for human survival on Earth, improved the conditions within which we live, and cultivated intelligent, moral and ethical behaviors and interactions among people.

Our Founding Fathers based the Constitution of the United States upon philosophical principles that have their origins in the historical Age of Reason. On the National Day of Reason, we remember and celebrate this history, including the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of religion and freedom from the imposition of religion by the state. Our nation's founders knew that the best way to protect religious freedom was to keep the government separate from religion.

The National Day of Reason is also a time to continue the effort our Founding Fathers began to form a more perfect union, something I work toward each day as a Member of Congress. Every year on this day, events such as food drives and blood drives are held in which Americans help their fellow citizens and our nation as a whole. These community service events are just some of the many ways Americans will be working to help those in need on the Day of Reason and throughout the year.

I encourage all citizens, residents and visitors to join in observing this day and focusing upon the employment of reason, critical thought, the scientific method, and free inquiry to the resolution of human problems and for the welfare of human kind.

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL ANIMAL ADVOCACY DAY

HON. PATRICK MEEHAN

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in honor of National Animal Advocacy Day. National Animal Advocacy Day encourages citizens to speak up to help secure meaningful protections for animals at the federal, state, and local levels.

On this National Animal Advocacy Day, I want to speak up for the humane treatment of our nation's horses. I ask the House of Representatives to pass H.R. 1094, the Safeguard American Food Exports Act, or SAFE Act. This bipartisan legislation, which I introduced with my colleague from Illinois, Rep. JAN SCHAKOWSKY, bans horse slaughter for human consumption and the export of horses for the same. Until a ban is in place, every horse is just one bad sale away from being sent to slaughter. I've seen this happen in my own district, and it must be stopped.

Horses are not bred for human consumption. Unlike dogs or cats, horses are routinely treated with drugs that can be toxic to humans. Horses are often transported without food, water, or rest in dangerously overcrowded trailers to endure an inhumane slaughter process.

Passage of the SAFE Act will not only protect our nation's horses. It will also protect consumers from exposure to the toxic chemicals found in horsemeat. Horses have a special place in our nation's history. Surveys show that 80 percent of American voters oppose the slaughter of horses for human consumption. It's a bill whose time has come. The SAFE Act will help to ensure that our horses get the protection they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, on National Animal Advocacy Day I applaud 170 of my colleagues in the House who are cosponsors of the SAFE Act, and encourage the rest of my colleagues to support it as well.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF OLIVIA BAIR ON HER OFFER OF APPOINTMENT TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to an outstanding student from Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. I am pleased to announce that Olivia Bair of Findlay, Ohio has been offered an appointment to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Olivia's offer of appointment poises her to attend the United States Naval Academy this fall with the incoming Class of 2018. Attending one of our nation's military academies not only offers the opportunity to serve our country but also guarantees a world-class education, while placing demands on those who undertake one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lives.

Olivia brings an enormous amount of leadership, service, and dedication to the incoming Class of 2018. While attending Findlay High School in Findlay, Ohio, Olivia served as secretary for both the Red Cross Youth Council and Findlay's chapter of the National Honor Society.

Throughout high school, Olivia was a member of her school's soccer and golf teams. Olivia also participated in the Latin Club as well as played club soccer. In addition, Olivia volunteered her time to her community at City Mission of Findlay. I am confident that Olivia will carry the lessons of her student and athletic leadership to the Naval Academy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Olivia Bair on the offer of her appointment to the United States Naval Academy. Our service academies offer the finest military training and education available. I am positive that Olivia will excel during her career at the Naval Academy, and I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their best wishes to her as she begins her service to the Nation.

HONORING THE 129TH RESCUE WING SUPPORT SQUADRON VICE SQUADRON COMMANDER ROGER DALE HIGBY

HON. JEFF DENHAM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor 129th Rescue Wing Support Squadron Vice Squadron Commander Roger Dale Higby, who is retiring after 52 years in law enforcement.

Mr. Higby moved to California at the age of five. He attended Los Gatos High School and graduated with an Associate of Arts Degree in Law Enforcement from West Valley College. Roger continued his education at San Jose State University where he acquired a Bachelor of Science in Administration of Justice.

Roger began his lengthy law enforcement career in 1961 as a campus police officer at San Jose City College. From 1963 to 1966, Roger served in the United States Army attaining the rank of Sergeant in the Military Police and as a traffic investigator. Afterwards, Mr. Higby served as a weapons specialist in the California Air National Guard. In 1966, he joined the Campbell Police Department and quickly moved up the ranks.

The County of Stanislaus was lucky to acquire him in 1976, when Roger became the Chief of Police of Riverbank. At that time, the department had lost its POST certification and was under the supervision of the Attorney General. In two years, Roger was able to regain that certification and get the department back on track. During this time, he also served in the City of Waterford and taught at Ceres High School.

Mr. Higby spent 20 years with the Modesto Police Department in a variety of departments. He was a Traffic Sergeant, a member of the SWAT team, and Watch Commander. Roger had a 90 percent homicide clearance record when he was a Detective Sergeant.

Since January 2013, he has served as the Vice Squadron Commander at the 129th Rescue Wing Support Squadron at Moffett Airfield.

Prior to joining the Squadron, Roger enjoyed many years at the State Guard Association of the United States as a MEMS Commandant Emeritus/MEMS International Coordinator.

Roger is married to Domenica Cindy and has a daughter, Danielle. In addition to his wife & child, his family includes his parents, Alfred & Mary Higby; siblings Richard and Joann Higby; biological parents Ruth Larsen and Ray Swift; and his biological siblings, Verna ''Sue'' Wertz, Thomas Bisbee, Dennis, Danny, Robert, and Debbie Swift. He enjoys spending time with family and friends, traveling, gardening, and farming almonds. Roger plans to continue consulting, training, mentoring, and writing after his retirement.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring and commending the outstanding contributions made to law enforcement by Vice Squadron Commander Roger Dale Higby and hereby wish him continued success in his retirement.

35TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TAIWAN RELATIONS ACT

HON. JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, the Taiwan Relations Act, signed into law 35 years ago on April 10, 1979 by President Jimmy Carter, officially recognizes the unique relationship between Taiwan and the United States.

Taiwan is one of our closest allies and best friends in the world.

The University of Tennessee started having a large number of students coming from Taiwan in the early 1960s because a man from that nation, Nelson Nee, was head of the U.T. International Students Program. Many of these students became, and many still are, leaders in the Republic of China.

I had the privilege of spending a week in Taiwan along with Congressman PETE SESSIONS and former Congressman Sonny Callahan around 10 years ago. The Taiwanese people could not have been kinder or more impressive to us than during that visit.

I am thankful for the friendship of the people from Taiwan and honored to mark the 35th Anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF TO HARLEM'S OLDEST ROMEO, CLYDE E. COOK

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, April 26, 2014, the Village of Harlem and the residents of the HDFC Houses at 206 West 121st Street came together to celebrate the life of Clyde E. Cook who passed away peacefully on April 15, 2014. It was a fitting tribute to a man who helped organize and redeveloped 206 West 121st Street Apartment Building into New York City's Housing Development Fund Corporation (HDFC) program, giving individual tenants ownership shares of their apartments, where Clyde served as president and building manager. Clyde and his beloved wife Clarissa were dear friends, allies and active members of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Democratic Club, the home club of my political family.

Clyde Cook's obituary in the New York Amsterdam News reads as follows:

''Harlem's oldest Romeo'' Clyde E. Cook was a proud member of the Harlem Village, and because of his inspiration and positive outlook, he was an optimistic figure in the community. His smile and kindness moved everyone that knew him; he was a strong pillar and role model.

Cook took great pride and pleasure in helping others. He loved writing poetry and going to the movies. His 6-foot-2-inch slender frame, rich baritone voice and cool demeanor led to his being called ''Harlem's oldest Romeo.'' He was a father figure and dear friend to many. His direct involvement as a Harlem community advocate enhanced and enriched the neighborhood.

He was born in Selma, Ala., on Aug. 2, 1936, to the late Ira and Lottie Cook. Clyde was the youngest of four children. At an early age, his family relocated to Harlem and Clyde received his education in the New York City public school system, graduating from Clinton High School in the Bronx. During his adult years, Clyde fell in love and married Clarissa Harrison and resided in Harlem until she preceded him in death in 2006.

Clyde joined the auxiliary police during the nineteen seventies and graduated with honors. He held many managerial positions during his professional career starting at Harlem Hospital, the City Municipal Building at 1 Centre Street, the Board of Elections and ending as president and building manager of his HDFC building, located at 206 West 121st Street, around the corner from Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard and a short distance from the Mecca of Harlem's African Square on 125th Street that he loved so dearly. Clyde performed outstanding and exemplary service, helping others attain affordable housing.

Clyde Cook's leadership abilities led him to become an active community advocate. He joined the 28th Precinct Auxiliary Police in an effort to bring crime down and clean up the neighborhood during Harlem's darkest drug infested days. Being such a lover of community, Clyde became the president of the Golden Awards Committee, where under his leadership he honored many of Harlem's elite professionals for exceptional and devoted acts of service within the community. Our beloved Clyde passed away quietly with dignity and grace after a brief on April 15.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my esteem colleagues to join me in honoring Harlem's oldest Romeo and community advocate, Mr. Clyde E. Cook.

HONORING 11 RESIDENTS OF BROWARD COUNTY SELECTED FOR THE BROWARD SENIOR HALL OF FAME

HON. THEODORE E. DEUTCH

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. DEUTCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of 11 outstanding seniors from my district that have been selected to be part of the Broward Senior Hall of Fame. Through the generous donation of their time and resources, these exemplary seniors have displayed a level of commitment to public service that can be admired by all.

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Broward County offers this annual distinction to seniors who have dedicated themselves to improving their community in South Florida. From ordinary citizens and businesspeople to public servants and advocates, they have gone above and beyond to serve both the elderly and those in need. The amount of time, money, and effort these individuals have expended for the betterment of their community is truly admirable and exhibits a level of passion worthy of recognition.

Congratulations to Margaret ''Marnie'' Allen, William Edelstein, Rose Manni, Rita Martin, Carmen Morales, Anthony C. Musto, Soutien Peng, Jackie Rosen, Joseph ''Joe'' Schwartz, Lucy Stevens, and Ilene Weisberg on their election to the 2014 Senior Hall of Fame. I hope that by honoring them in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that they can continue to inspire South Floridians to live by their example.

42ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN ACTIVISTS ALLIANCE OF WASHINGTON, D.C. (GLAA)

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the House of Representatives to join me in celebrating the 43rd anniversary of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance of Washington, DC (GLAA). GLAA is a valued organization that has become a local leader in the struggle for equal rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community.

Since its formation in April 1971, GLAA has been a respected and tireless advocate for full and equal rights for the residents of the District of Columbia, and has been at the forefront of efforts to strengthen enforcement of the landmark D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977. One of GLAA's most significant achievements, on which it worked with coalition partners, D.C. elected officials, and District residents, was the enactment of the District of Columbia Religious Freedom and Civil Rights Equality Amendment, which permits same-sex couples to marry in the District.

In addition to its leadership on LGBT rights in the District, GLAA has always provided leadership on a wide range of civil rights issues, such as family rights, police accountability, and access to condoms in prisons and D.C. public schools. GLAA also emphasizes effective public health strategies and accountability in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the District.

At GLAA's 34rd anniversary reception on April 30, 2014, the recipients of its 2014 Distinguished Service Awards will be recognized, including:

Jerry Clark, Chair of the D.C. Statehood Coalition, political director of D.C. for Democracy, and a board member of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence. He has served as a trustee for the Law and Society Association, a co-chair of the Whitman-Walker spring gala, and as a member of the Democratic National Committee's Gay and Lesbian Leadership Council. He has served on the board of directors of the

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, including as co-chair. He was appointed to the Mayor's Committee on the 15th Anniversary of the March on Washington. He earned his J.D. from the University of Chicago and his undergraduate degree from Princeton. He is a health benefits consultant.

Earl D. Fowlkes, Jr., President and CEO of the Center for Black Equity, Inc. (originally known as the International Federation of Black Prides), the only Black LGBT international organization in the world. He founded IFBP in 1999 as a coalition of Black Pride organizers in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and South Africa to promote a multinational network of LGBT Pride and community-based organizations. There are over 30 Black Pride events with over 450,000 attendees each year. IFBP became the Center for Black Equity in 2012 with an expanded mission ''to promote a multinational LGBT network dedicated to improving health and wellness opportunities, economic empowerment, and equal rights while promoting individual and collective work, responsibility, and self-determination.'' He previously served as executive director of the DC Comprehensive AIDS Resources and Education Consortium (formerly known as the DC CARE Consortium) and Damien Ministries. He was licensed as a Social Worker in New Jersey, and has worked on HIV/AIDS and LGBT issues for 25 years. He serves on seven nonprofit boards, and is chair of Mayor Vincent Gray's LGBT Advisory Committee. He attended Rutgers University with degrees in history and business.

Alison Gill, Government Affairs Director at The Trevor Project, the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender queer (LGBTQ) youth, where she coordinates advocacy for LGBTQ youth mental health and well-being through policy initiatives at the federal, state, and local level. Prior to joining The Trevor Project, Alison was Public Policy Manager at the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, where she focused on state and local safe schools policy issues. Alison also engages in local transgender advocacy in Washington, DC, through Trans Legal Advocates of Washington. Alison is a graduate of Rutgers University, and received her J.D. from The George Washington University Law School.

I ask the House to join me in honoring the recipients of GLAA's 2014 Distinguished Service Award and in celebrating GLAA's 43 years of contributions to the LGBT community in the District of Columbia.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF JOHN WENDT ON HIS OFFER OF APPOINTMENT TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to an outstanding student from Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. I am pleased to announce that John Wendt of Sylvania, Ohio has been offered an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

John's offer of appointment poises him to attend the United States Air Force Academy this fall with the incoming Class of 2018. Attending one of our nation's military academies not only offers the opportunity to serve our country but also guarantees a world-class education, while placing demands on those who undertake one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lives.

John brings an enormous amount of leadership, service, and dedication to the incoming Class of 2018. While attending Sylvania Northview High School in Sylvania, Ohio, John served on the Principle Advisory Committee, as a member of Sylvania's chapter of the National Honor Society and served as an office aid.

Throughout high school, John was a member of his school's soccer and basketball teams and earned varsity letters in both sports. John also participated with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes organization and the Big Serve Mission Trip his freshman year of high school, Latin Club as well as played club soccer. I am confident that John will carry the lessons of his student and athletic leadership to the Air Force Academy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating John Wendt on the offer of his appointment to the United States Air Force Academy. Our service academies offer the finest military training and education available. I am positive that John will excel during his career at the Air Force Academy, and I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their best wishes to him as he begins his service to the Nation.

PREVENT ALL SORING TACTICS (PAST) ACT

HON. ED WHITFIELD

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Speaker, this Wednesday is National Animal Advocacy Day. On this day, citizens are invited to help enact meaningful protections for animals at the federal, state and local level by being an effective voice for animals.

On National Animal Advocacy Day, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to renew my call for the House of Representatives to pass the Prevent All Soring Tactics Act, or PAST Act. This important measure will stop the soring of horses, an abusive practice used by horse trainers in the Tennessee Walking, Racking, and Spotted Saddle Horse industries. Congress passed the Horse Protection Act more than 40 years ago in order to protect horses from soring. Unfortunately, a failed self-policing enforcement system and inadequate penalties in the statute have allowed this cruelty to continue.

This bipartisan legislation is already cosponsored by well over half of the House and is supported by many organizations in the equine industry, veterinary medicine, and animal protection communities. I am pleased to provide a copy of the list of support for the record to the full House. I urge my colleagues to take swift action to bring this important bill to the floor. Below is a current list of supporters of the PAST Act, H.R. 1518:

ENDORSEMENTS FOR THE PREVENT ALL SORING TACTICS (PAST) ACT

HORSE ORGANIZATIONS

1. American Horse Council
2. American Quarter Horse Association
3. American Morgan Horse Association
4. American Paint Horse Association
5. American Saddlebred Horse Association
6. Appaloosa Horse Club
7. Arizona Coalition for Equines
8. Carolina Walkers, Inc. (South Carolina)
9. Delaware Equine Council
10. Equine Voices Rescue & Sanctuary (Arizona)
11. European Tennessee Walking Horse Association
12. Fenway Foundation for Friesian Horses
13. For The Tennessee Walking Horse
14. Friends of Sound Horses
15. Friesian Horse Association of North America
16. Gaitway Walking Horse Association (Missouri)
17. Idaho Horse Council
18. International Friesian Show Horse Association
19. International Walking Horse Association
20. Maryland Horse Council
21. Michigan Horse Council
22. Minnesota Horse Council
23. Mountain Pleasure Horse Association (Kentucky)
24. National Plantation Walking Horse Association
25. National Walking Horse Association
26. Natural Walking Horses (Europe)
27. New York State Horse Breeders Association
28. New York State Horse Council
29. New York State Plantation Walking Horse Club
30. Northern California Walking Horse Association
31. One Horse at a Time, Inc. (Kentucky)
32. Pennsylvania Equine Council
33. Pennsylvania Pleasure Walking Horse Association
34. Pinto Horse Association of America
35. Plantation Walking Horse Association of California
36. Plantation Walking Horses of Maryland
37. Professional Horsemen's Association of America
38. Pure Pleasure Gaited Horse Association (Oklahoma)
39. Rocky Mountain Horse Association (Kentucky)
40. Sound Trails and Rails Society (Georgia)
41. South Carolina Horse Council
42. South Dakota Quarter Horse Association
43. Southern Comfort Gaited Horse Club (Idaho)
44. Speak Up for Horses, Inc. (Kentucky)
45. Tennessee Walking Horse Exhibitors Association of Montana
46. Tennessee Walking Horse Association of New Jersey, Inc.
47. Tennessee Walking Horse Association of Oklahoma
48. Tennessee Walking Horse Exhibitors Association of Oregon
49. Tennessee Walking Horse Heritage Society
50. Texas State Horse Council
51. United Pleasure Walking Horse Association (Missouri)
52. United Professional Horsemen's Association
53. United States Equestrian Federation
54. Walking Horse Association of Michigan
55. World Walking Horse Association
56. Yankee Walkers/Gaited Horses of New England (Maine/New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island/Connecticut, and Vermont)

VETERINARY AND ANIMAL HEALTH

1. American Veterinary Medical Association
2. American Association of Equine Practitioners
3. National Association of Federal Veterinarians
4. U.S. Animal Health Association
5. Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
6. Veterinarians for Equine Welfare
7. Alabama Veterinary Medical Association
8. Alaska Veterinary Medical Association
9. Arizona Veterinary Medical Association
10. Arkansas Veterinary Medical Association
11. California Veterinary Medical Association
12. Colorado Veterinary Medical Association
13. Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association
14. Delaware Veterinary Medical Association
15. District of Columbia Veterinary Medical Association
16. Florida Association of Equine Practitioners
17. Florida Veterinary Medical Association
18. Georgia Veterinary Medical Association
19. Hawaii Veterinary Medical Association
20. Idaho Veterinary Medical Association
21. Illinois Veterinary Medical Association
22. Indiana Veterinary Medical Association
23. Iowa Veterinary Medical Association
24. Kansas Veterinary Medical Association
25. Kentucky Veterinary Medical Association
26. Louisiana Veterinary Medical Association
27. Maine Veterinary Medical Association
28. Maryland Veterinary Medical Association
29. Massachusetts Veterinary Medical Association
30. Michigan Veterinary Medical Association
31. Mississippi Veterinary Medical Association
32. Missouri Veterinary Medical Association
33. Montana Veterinary Medical Association
34. Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association
35. Nevada Veterinary Medical Association
36. New Hampshire Veterinary Medical Association
37. New Jersey Veterinary Medical Association
38. New Mexico Veterinary Medical Association
39. New York State Veterinary Medical Association
40. North Carolina Veterinary Medical Association
41. North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association
42. Ohio Veterinary Medical Association
43. Oklahoma Veterinary Medical Association
44. Oregon Veterinary Medical Association
45. Pennsylvania Veterinary Medical Association
46. Puerto Rico Veterinary Medical Association
47. Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association
48. South Carolina Association of Veterinarians
49. South Dakota Veterinary Medical Association
50. Tennessee Veterinary Medical Association
51. Texas Veterinary Medical Association
52. Utah Veterinary Medical Association
53. Vermont Veterinary Medical Association
54. Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
55. Washington State Veterinary Medical Association
56. West Virginia Veterinary Medical Association
57. Wisconsin Veterinary Medical Association
58. Wyoming Veterinary Medical Association
59. Donna Preston Moore, DVM, former head of USDA's Horse Protection Program
60. Tracy A. Turner, DVM, MS
61. Michelle Abraham, Resident, New Bolton Center, University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine
62. John C. Haffner, DVM, ABVP(Eq)
63. Susan Botts, DVM
64. Angela M. Dion, DVM
65. Michelle Abraham, Resident, New Bolton Center, University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine
66. Hanna Galantino-Homer, VMD, PHD
67. Alicia Grossman, DVM
68. Sue Lindborg, CVT Research Specialist New Bolton Center, University of PA School Of Veterinary Medicine
69. Midge Leitch, VMD, former head of Radiology, New Bolton Center, University of PA School Of Veterinary Medicine
70. Harry Werner, VMD, past president, American Association of AAEP
71. Judith L. Ford, Veterinary Technician
72. Benson B. Martin, DVM, Associate Professor Sports Medicine, New Bolton Center, University of PA School of Veterinary Medicine
73. Nat Messer, DVM, University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine
74. Mary A. Robinson, VMD, PhD
75. Mary Lynn Stanton, DVM
76. Joy Tomlinson, DVM
77. Steve O'Grady, DVM, APF

ANIMAL PROTECTION

1. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
2. Animal Law Coalition
3. Animal Legal Defense Fund
4. Animal Protection Voters (New Mexico)
5. Animal Welfare Institute
6. Best Friends Animal Society
7. Dakin Humane Society (Massachusetts)
8. Equine Welfare Alliance
9. Homes for Horses Coalition
10. Horse Harbor Foundation (Washington State)
11. Horse Haven of Tennessee
12. Humane Society Legislative Fund
13. Michigan Horse Welfare Coalition
14. Mississippi Horses
15. Nevins Farm & Equine Center, Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
16. Oregon Horse Welfare Council
17. Richmond Friends of Animals (Virginia)
18. Second Chance Ranch (Washington State)
19. Tennessee Voters for Animal Protection
20. The Humane Society of the United States
21. Virginia Alliance for Animal Shelters
22. Virginia Equine Welfare Society
23. Virginia Federation of Humane Societies
24. Virginia Beach Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

HORSE INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

1. Bill Harlin, Past President, Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association and owner of Harlinsdale Farm
2. Clay Harlin, former Senior Vice-President, Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association
3. Marty Irby, Past President, Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association
4. Chuck Cadle, Past Executive Director, Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association
5. Georgina Bloomberg, professional equestrian sponsored by Ariat International
6. Rick Wies, Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association former VP, Pleasure Horse Division
7. Susan Kayne, host of ''Unbridled'' television show
8. Pat Parelli, founder of Parelli Natural Horsemanship
9. Tom Seay, Best of America by Horseback, trail riding TV show
10. Jan Ebeling, dressage trainer, member of the 2012 Olympic dressage team for the USA and co-owner of Rafalca
11. Dr. April Austin, USDF Bronze, Silver and Gold medalist
12. Monty Roberts, award-winning trainer, best-selling author of The Man Who Listens to Horses
13. Carl Bledsoe, former member of Walking Horse Trainers' Association
14. Pamela Reband, MD, Board of Directors member and former Vice President of TWHBEA
15. Dr. Rebecca Gimenez, Technical Large Animal Emergency Rescue
16. Eric Gray, walking horse farrier
17. Leslie Desmond, natural horsemanship clinician and author
18. Gael Borquin, dressage and eventing coach
19. Karl Mikolka, Former Chief Rider, Spanish Riding School, Vienna, Austria and USDF Hall of Fame
20. E. Allen Buck, Sympathetic Horsemanship
21. Steffen Peters, American Olympian and FEI rider
22. Shannon Peters, dressage instructor and FEI rider
23. Sheryl Rudolph, FITS/Fun in the Saddle, Inc.
24. Heather Barklow, Equine Connections, LLC
25. Diane Sept, Connected Riding Senior Instructor
26. Anita Adams, dressage trainer and FEI rider
27. Mary Werning, dressage trainer and FEI Rider, USDF Medalist
28. Maria Lisa Eastman, Raintree Equine Assisted Services, equine therapy program
29. Dr. Christine Teicheira, equine and human chiropractor
30. Gigi Nutter, USDF Gold Medalist, dressage trainer, owner Touch-N-Go Farm
31. Lisa Kelly Simmons, Lipizzan breeder, Past Director of the United States Lipizzan Federation
32. Jayne Fingerhut, MA, CMT, USDF Regional Champion Rider, equine business patent holder and manufacturer
33. Michelle Andrews Sabol, director of an equestrian therapy program
34. Holly Mason, Equine Biomechanics Specialist, author of It's Never Too Late
35. Terri Farley (author, the Phantom Stallion series)

NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL BOARDS

1. The Tennessean
2. Chattanooga Times Free Press

LAW ENFORCEMENT

1. Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
2. National Sheriffs' Association
3. Sheriff Harrison Moss, Adair County, KY
4. Sheriff Stan Hudson, Caldwell County, KY
5. Sheriff Bill Marcum, Calloway County, KY
6. Sheriff Keith Cane, Daviess County, KY
7. Sheriff Rick Clemons, Grayson County, KY
8. Sheriff Bruce Hampton, Harrison County, KY

9. Sheriff Frank Latham, Hopkins County, KY
10. Sheriff Charles Lee Korzenborn, Kenton County, KY
11. Sheriff Merle Edlin, Larue County, KY
12. Sheriff Jimmy Clements, Marion County, KY
13. Sheriff Patrick Boggs, Mason County, KY
14. Sheriff William ''Butch'' Kerrick, Meade County, KY

PUBLIC OPINION IN KEY STATES WITH LARGEST TENNESSEE WALKING HORSE INDUSTRY

A poll conducted in December 2012 by Mason-Dixon Polling & Research found that 75% of Tennessee voters and 69% of Kentucky voters support federal legislation to strengthen the Horse Protection Act by ending the current, failed system of industry self-policing, banning the use of chains and stacks (devices implicated in the soring process) on horses at shows, and increasing penalties for violating the law.

LEGISLATORS

Sponsor of original Horse Protection Act of 1970: Former Senator Joseph Tydings

Current bipartisan cosponsors of the PAST Act: 51 Senators on S. 1406 / 269 Representatives on H.R. 1518 (320 total)

CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

1. Alyssa Milano, actress, Charmed, Project Runway All-Stars
2. Priscilla Presley, film and TV actress, Dallas, The Naked Gun
3. Emmylou Harris, singer-songwriter and 12–time Grammy winner
4. Kesha, platinum recording singer-songwriter
5. Viggo Mortensen, actor, The Lord of the Rings
6. Wendie Malick, actress, Hot in Cleveland
7. Loretta Swit, stage and TV actress, MASH
8. Jillian Michaels, trainer on The Biggest Loser
9. Mark Miller, musician, Sawyer Brown
10. Lynn Anderson, singer-songwriter
11. Jenna Morasca, actress, model, grand prize winner of Survivor: The Amazon
12. Alexandra Paul, actress, Baywatch
13. Dawn Olivieri, film and TV actress, True Blood
14. Joe Camp, director of Benji films, author of Soul of a Horse
15. Kelly Carlson, actress, Nip/Tuck
16. Mary Ann Kennedy, singer-songwriter
17. Lacy J. Dalton, singer-songwriter

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained during the second vote series on April 29, 2014. Had I been present, I would have voted Yes on both H.R. 4414, the Expatriate Health Coverage Clarification Act of 2014, and H.R. 627, the National Park Service 110th Anniversary Commemorative Coin Act.

IN HONOR OF BRIG. GENERAL CECIL NEELY

HON. KEVIN BRADY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor General Cecil Neely, an American hero, dedicated public servant, and a friend.

After getting his first taste of public service as President of the Madisonville High School Honor Society, Cecil first took those leadership skills to Sam Houston State University and then into the U.S. Army. Rising from Private to Brigadier General is no small feat. It takes a soldier's soldier to climb that ladder.

General Neely spent nearly three decades serving his country above and beyond the call of duty. Not only was he honored with our nation's highest peacetime award, the Distinguished Service Medal, he received the Bronze Star for valor in Vietnam, as well as the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Parachutists' Badge, and numerous other U.S. and foreign awards.

It is no wonder this former member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is also a member of the Infantry ''Hall of Fame'' at the United States Army Infantry School.

General Neely returned to Sam Houston State University to earn his Master's degree in history. And after his retirement from the military he dove into another form of public service as County Judge of Madison County. Resolving redistricting issues and cutting property taxes while improving medical services, it took Judge Neely's work to establish a District Attorney's office and a ''one-stop'' center to bring county and state services together.

General Neely prepared Madison County—and the Brazos Valley—for the 21st century. As a chairman of the Brazos Valley Council of Governments from 2001–2002, and member from 1994–2006, Cecil Neely has led by example at every step.

Of course, he couldn't have done it all without the great support system he has in his wife, Lynn and their children, Susan, Russell, and Michael.

Our communities and our entire nation have been blessed by his service. Brigadier General Cecil Neely, thank you and job well done, sir.

ST. MARY MEDICAL CENTER

HON. MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, for more than 40 years, St. Mary Medical Center, located in my home district of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, has been serving the community and working to ensure a happier, healthier quality of life for tens of thousands of my constituents.

This week, St. Mary Medical Center was recognized for their outstanding work as they were named one of the best hospitals in the nation by Truven Health Analytics. After comparing 2,800 hospitals across the country based on 10 categories—including patient safety, patient satisfaction, and clinical standard—the group named St. Mary Medical Center one of its top healthcare providers.

Furthermore, the St. Mary's received the Everest Award—marking it as one of the most improved hospitals nationwide.

To those of us who know St. Mary Medical Center best, we are pleased—but not surprised—as St. Mary is an outstanding health care facility, employing thousands of dedicated health care professionals, on the cutting edge of all health care innovations, and a recognized leader in the region for providing the highest quality of care to their patients every day. They are a caring, faith-based medical center in the tradition of St. Francis and they are totally prepared to meet the healthcare needs of all in our community as they do so with grateful hearts, impeccable credentials, and a clear view toward their Franciscan mission and the future role of healthcare.

St. Mary's will always have a special place in my heart—it's where I met my wife and it's where my daughter and son-in-law both work today as nurse professionals, and it's where I received critical medical treatment when I needed it most.

This national recognition is well deserved and is a testament to the hard work of everyone involved at St. Mary Medical Center—from administrators and doctors to nurses and support staff. I offer my most sincere congratulations on this well-deserved award!

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY OF LYNN AND GLENDA MARTIN

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a very special occasion today—the 50th wedding anniversary of Lynn and Glenda Martin.

Glenda Jean Dalton was born in Gainesville, Georgia, and Horace Lynn Martin was born in Anniston, Alabama. They met at First Baptist Church of Saks over 50 years ago. They were married at First Baptist Church of Saks on May 22nd, 1954, and they are still very active members today. Lynn also serves as a deacon and as the Church Administrator.

Both Lynn and Glenda attended college at Jacksonville State University. While there, Glenda got her Master's Degree in Education, and Lynn got a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Math. Glenda taught at Wellborn High School until her retirement, and Lynn owns his own business in Anniston, Green's Art and Framing. He has also worked for several accounting firms over the years. Mr. Martin is also very involved with the Saks High School football team where he has carried the chains for the team for about 48 years. The Calhoun County School Board just voted to name the old high school gym after Mr. Martin. It is now known as the Lynn Martin gym.

Together, Lynn and Glenda have two daughters: Sheilah Brady and Dawne Vaughn. They have 7 grandchildren: Cory Wooten, Cassidy Wooten, Trey Brady, Jessica Vaughn, Aaron Vaughn, Peyton Vaughn, and Grayson Vaughn.

Please join me in congratulating this lovely couple on 50 years together. Mrs. Martin, a cancer survivor, and Mr. Martin set an example of love and service for the people of the Third District. The celebration will take place on May 10th at a reception with their friends and family members.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF EVAN ULINSKI ON HIS OFFER OF APPOINTMENT TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to an outstanding student from Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. I am pleased to announce that Evan Ulinksi of Elmore, Ohio has been offered an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Evan's offer of appointment poises him to attend the United States Air Force Academy this fall with the incoming Class of 2018. Attending one of our nation's military academies not only offers the opportunity to serve our country but also guarantees a world-class education, while placing demands on those who undertake one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lives.

Evan brings an enormous amount of leadership, service, and dedication to the incoming Class of 2018. While attending Woodmore High School in Elmore, Ohio, Evan served as a member of the Key Club and a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes organization.

Throughout high school, Evan was a member of his school's football, baseball and wrestling teams and earned varsity letters in all three sports. I am confident that Evan will carry the lessons of his student and athletic leadership to the Air Force Academy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Evan Ulinski on the offer of his appointment to the United States Air Force Academy. Our service academies offer the finest military training and education available. I am positive that Evan will excel during his career at the Air Force Academy, and I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their best wishes to him as he begins his service to the Nation.

IN MEMORY OF CAPTAIN JAMES EDWARD CHAFFIN III

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, April 12th, a Service of Death and Resurrection was held for an American hero Captain James Edward "Ed" Chaffin III.

Participating at the standing room only service at Mount Hebron United Methodist Church of West Columbia, South Carolina, were Iris Jo Harley as organist, with greetings from Reverend Mandy Taylor Young, remarks by Lt. Col. Phillip Jenison, and a sermon by Reverend Tim Rogers. Burial followed in the church graveyard.

The Service program contained the following tribute:

CAPTAIN JAMES EDWARD CHAFFIN, III

James Edward "Ed" Chaffin, III, was born on February 4, 1987, in West Columbia, South Carolina, the son of Elizabeth Rhodes Chaffin and the late James Edward Chaffin, Jr. He passed away while serving with the 82nd Airborne Division in Kandahar, Afghanistan on Tuesday, April 1, 2014.

Ed was a 2005 Honor Graduate of the Brookland-Cayce High School in Cayce, South Carolina, where he played football, was a member of the Interact Club, the National Honor Society, and the newspaper staff.

A 2009 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, he majored in Comparative Politics and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. While at West Point, he was a member of the Russian Club and participated in a club trip to the country of Azerbaijan.

Ed was an avid reader who enjoyed reading about history, especially on military subjects. He had a passion for travel and experiencing new cultures all over the world, which took him to Thailand, Vietnam, and Greece, just to name a few. He had a witty sense of humor, which was immediately evident to all who know him. Even far away, he always rooted for Gamecock football. He has a very caring spirit and a strong work ethic, making him an honored member of the armed forces protecting our freedom.

Ed's first tour of service was in 2011 for Operation Iraqi Freedom. His awards and decorations included the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the basic Parachutist Badge and the Air Assault Badge, and the NATO Medal.

He is survived by his mother, Elizabeth "Beth" Chaffin of West Columbia; his sisters, Susan Chaffin Bilton and her husband, Jarod, of Mt. Pleasant, SC, and Nancy Chaffin of Charlotte, NC; and many classmates, friends, and fellow service members all over the world.

SAN ANTONIO MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. LAMAR SMITH

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the San Antonio Manufacturers Association (SAMA) is one of the oldest manufacturing associations in the country. And this year, SAMA celebrates its 100th year as the voice of the manufacturing industry in the San Antonio area.

"Made in America" is a label we want to see on advanced technologies produced by American laboratories and factories. We must ensure that the United States provides an environment where the manufacturing industry can strive and grow.

SAMA helps with this initiative. The Association advocates for policies that will boost American manufacturing and help train the next generation of manufacturers.

The manufacturing industry stimulates the economy by providing good paying jobs and creating high-quality American products. More than 1,500 manufacturing companies operate in the San Antonio area alone, and in 2011, these companies' combined impact on the local economy reached $22.5 billion.

San Antonians greatly benefit from the manufacturing industry. Over 50,000 residents of the Alamo City work in this industry and the average wage is 11 percent higher than the average wage for all San Antonio jobs. So the manufacturing industry is good for all Americans, especially those in Central Texas.

Congratulations, San Antonio Manufacturers Association, on reaching the century mark. And thank you for all you do for San Antonio and the great State of Texas.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TRAVELING EXOTIC ANIMAL PROTECTION ACT

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Traveling Exotic Animal Protection Act. This legislation would restrict the use of exotic, non-domesticated animals in traveling entertainment.

Based upon publically available research, including video and photographic evidence, it is clear that traveling circuses cannot provide proper living conditions for exotic animals. This legislation is intended to target the most egregious situations involving exotic and wild animals in traveling circuses. Keeping elephants in chains, confining lions and tigers in small cages, forcing them to perform unnatural tricks for the sole purpose of human amusement is increasingly difficult to justify the more we learn about these intelligent, social creatures.

The Traveling Exotic Animal Protection Act would comprehensively tackle the use of all exotic animals in circuses. The bill would end the confinement of animals for extended periods in temporary facilities, stop cruel training and control methods employed by circuses, and limit the danger these animals pose to public safety. The bill intentionally targets only the most egregious conditions these exotic animals are subjected to and would not impact zoos, aquariums, rodeos or other static facilities with captive wildlife.

While this Congress needs to take action on a variety of issues vital to our nation's well-being, I believe we should also take the opportunity to focus public attention on instances of fundamental animal mistreatment. How we choose to treat animals is a reflection of our nation's values, for better or worse. Too often, however, inhumane activities are hidden, rarely discussed, and left to continue unabated.

The Traveling Exotic Animal Protection Act will ensure this significant animal protection issue, the use of exotic animals in traveling entertainment, receives proper scrutiny. I look forward to working with my colleagues to advance this important animal protection legislation.

CONGRATULATING CHRISTINE SULLIVAN

HON. JOHN F. TIERNEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Christine Sullivan on her retirement and thank her for her dedicated service

to the residents and small businesses in the Sixth District, and throughout Massachusetts.

For the last twelve years, Christine has served as the CEO of the Enterprise Center at Salem State University. Under Christine's leadership, the Enterprise Center has grown to provide numerous opportunities for local small businesses to improve and expand their operations. The Center offers more than 70 annual business skill workshops as well as a variety of specialized development programs including the Million Dollar Women Symposium, the 128 Venture North Breakfast series, and an extensive Mentor Program and the Growth Program.

The Enterprise Center currently works with more than 6,000 small business owners and employees in more than 142 communities throughout the state.

Before joining the Enterprise Center, Christine founded and served as CEO of Hawthorne Associates, a marketing, advertising and public relations firm serving clients in the US and internationally. Christine also served as Massachusetts Secretary of Consumer Affairs, Chief of Staff to former Congressman Michael Harrington, and Chair of the Communications Department at Endicott College.

Christine not only serves her community through her work at the Enterprise Center, she serves as a Director of Beverly Cooperative Bank, the North Shore Alliance for Economic Development, the Salem YMCA, the Salem Chamber of Commerce, the Salem Award for Human Rights and Social Justice, and the Creative Economy Council of Massachusetts.

I congratulate Christine on her successful career and wish her well as she begins her retirement.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. PETERS of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, on Monday April 28, 2014 I was not present for 2 votes. I wish the record to reflect my intentions had I been present to vote.

Had I been present for rollcall No. 178, I would have voted ''yea.''

Had I been present for rollcall No. 179, I would have voted ''yea.''

RECOGNIZING MAINE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB FOR WHITE CAP MOUNTAIN PROJECT

HON. CHELLIE PINGREE

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. PINGREE of Maine. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be from a state that features some of the most beautiful and diverse natural landscapes in the country. From the mountains to the sea, with deep woods in between, Maine has many places that inspire a sense of wonder for the world around us.

That said, they are not always easy to reach. For that reason, I'm grateful for organizations and volunteers in our state who work so hard to protect these special places while building trails and other accommodations so the public can enjoy them.

I would like to recognize one of these groups in particular for recently restoring a key section of the Appalachian Trail, which stretches from Georgia to Maine. With partner organizations and dedicated volunteers, the Maine Appalachian Trail Club rebuilt the trail up White Cap Mountain, whose summit boasts some of the most spectacular views in the state. Support from the Federal Recreational Trails Program—an absolutely critical source of funding that has helped build thousands of miles of public trails across the country—was also critical to the project's success.

The difficulty of the rebuilding should not be understated. The trail is in a remote location on very rugged terrain. But the club's care and hard work have resulted in a path that will last for many years, accommodate more hikers, and limit environmental impacts on the mountain. Thousands of hikers have already used the newly refurbished trail.

Mr. Speaker, projects like this that benefit our community and deepen our appreciation of nature should not go unrecognized. My sincere congratulations go to the Maine Appalachian Trail Club on a job well done.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF JASON HUG ON HIS OFFER OF APPOINTMENT TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to an outstanding student from Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. I am pleased to announce that Jason Hug of Bryan, Ohio has accepted an offer of appointment to the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York.

Jason's offer of appointment poises him to attend the United States Military Academy this fall with the incoming Class of 2018. Attending one of our nation's military academies is an invaluable experience that offers a world-class education, while placing demands on those who undertake one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lives.

Jason brings an enormous amount of leadership, service, and dedication to the incoming Class of 2018. While attending Bryan High School in Bryan, Ohio, Jason was on the Honor Roll, was awarded numerous outstanding scholar athlete awards, a member of the National Honor Society, and maintained a 4.0 grade point average that placed him first in his class.

Throughout high school, Jason played football, basketball, baseball, and track and field, being voted captain of his football team his senior year. In addition, Jason was class president and volunteered at his church and other community events. I am confident that Jason will carry the lessons of his student and athletic leadership to the Military Academy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Jason Hug on the acceptance of his appointment to the United States Military Academy. Our service academies offer the finest military training and education available. I am positive that Jason will excel during his career at the Military Academy, and I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their best wishes to him as he begins his service to the Nation.

RECOGNIZING THE ILLINOIS MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE ACADEMY STUDENTS SELECTED AS FINALISTS IN NASA'S EXPLORATION DESIGN CHALLENGE

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the student engineers of Team Titan from the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy for being selected as national finalists in NASA's Exploration Design Challenge. Team Titan, led by Dr. Eric Hawker, is one of just five high school teams from across the country to be selected as finalists for the opportunity to contribute to the design of radiation shields for NASA's Orion spacecraft.

Over 125,000 students from 81 countries have participated in NASA's Exploration Design Challenge. This competition is designed to engage students on the topic of space exploration and challenge them to think like scientists and engineers.

The shield designed by Team Titan could protect a sensor inside the Orion spacecraft against space radiation. Team Titan's design was reviewed by Orion engineers, as well as educators from NASA and the National Institute of Aerospace, and selected as a finalist among the forty-six teams that submitted engineering notebooks with radiation shield designs.

IMSA has continuously demonstrated a dedication to offering the kind of education necessary to create future generations of scientists and engineers. Team Titan's selection as a finalist in NASA's Exploration Design Challenge provides a shining example of why IMSA is internationally recognized for its leadership in teaching science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to students in grades 10–12.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Dr. Eric Hawker, and the students of Team Titan: Cassandra Erwin, Ryan Franks, Claire Hensley, Michael Hrcek, Alec Mangan, and Alonzo Marsh, for being selected as finalists in NASA's Exploration Design Challenge.

ARTICLE FROM TODAY'S FINANCIAL TIMES ENTITLED, ''CHINA TO OVERTAKE U.S. AS TOP ECONOMIC POWER THIS YEAR''

HON. JIM COOPER

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. COOPER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit the following article from today's Financial Times entitled, ''China To overtake U.S. as top economic power this year''.

[From Financial Times, Apr. 30, 2014]

CHINA TO OVERTAKE US AS TOP ECONOMIC POWER THIS YEAR

(By Chris Giles)

The US is on the brink of losing its status as the world's largest economy and is likely to slip behind China this year, sooner than widely expected, to the world's leading statistical agencies.

The US has been the global leader since overtaking the UK in 1872. Most economists previously thought China would pull ahead in 2019.

The data, compiled by the International Comparison Programme hosted by the World Bank, and to be released today, are the most authoritative estimates of what money can buy in different countries and are used by most public and private sector organisations, such as the International Monetary Fund. This is the first time they have been updated since 2005.

After extensive research on the prices of goods and services the ICP concluded that money goes further in poorer countries than previously thought, prompting it to increase the relative size of emerging market economies.

The estimates of the real cost of living, known as purchasing power parity, or PPPs, are recognised as the best way to compare the size of economies rather than using volatile exchange rates, which rarely reflect the true cost of goods and services: on this measure the IMF put US GDP in 2012 at $16.2tn, and China's at $8.2tn.

In 2005, the ICP thought that China's economy was less than half the size of the US, accounting for only 43 per cent of America's total. Using the new methodology—and reflecting the fact that China's economy has grown much more quickly—the research placed China's GDP at 87 per cent of the US in 2011.

For 2011, the report says: ''The US remained the world's largest economy, but it was closely followed by China when measured using PPPs''.

With the IMF expecting China's economy to have grown 24 per cent between 2011 and 2014 while the US is expected to expand only 7.6 per cent, China is likely to overtake the US this year.

The figures revolutionise the picture of the world's economic landscape, boosting the importance of large middle-income countries. India becomes the third-largest economy having previously been in 10th place. The size of its economy almost doubled from 19 per cent of the US in 2005 to 37 per cent in 2011.

Russia, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico make the top 12 in the global table. In contrast, high costs and lower growth push the UK and Japan further behind the US than in the 2005 tables while Germany improved its relative position a little and Italy remained the same.

The findings will intensify arguments about control over global international organisations such as the World Bank and IMF, which are increasingly out of line with the balance of global economic power.

When looking at the actual consumption per head, the report found the new methodology together with faster growth in poor countries have ''greatly reduced'' the gap between rich and poor, ''suggesting that the world has become more equal''.

The world's rich countries still account for 50 per cent of global GDP while containing only 17 per cent of the world's population.

Having compared the cost of living in different countries, the report also found that the four most expensive countries to live in are: Switzerland, Norway, Bermuda and Australia, with the cheapest Egypt, Pakistan, Myanmar and Ethiopia.

RECOGNIZING DR. CHRISTOPHER ''CHRIS'' ARTERTON

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues in the House to join me in recognizing Dr. Christopher ''Chris'' Arterton, the Founding Dean of the nation's first school for professional politics, The George Washington University (GWU) Graduate School of Political Management who will be leaving his full-time post at GWU, but will remain on staff serving in a research capacity.

Dr. Arterton earned his B.A. from Trinity College, his M.A. from American University and his PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Dr. Arterton is a distinguished author who has written several books on American politics and leadership. He is also a noted expert in political strategy and tactics, public opinion, and ethics and leadership in politics. His vision is to make democracy work where it is welcomed around the globe.

Prior to coming to GWU, Dr. Arterton was a professor at Yale University for 10 years, teaching in both the Political Science Department and the School of Organization and Management. Additionally, Dr. Arterton played an active role at The Institute of Politics at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, having served on five faculty study groups.

Dr. Arterton's research, his 20 years of teaching, and his considerable experience as a consultant on American public opinion make him an expert on the strategic environment of American political leaders, an area that encompasses the news media and communications technology generally and political strategy. Dr. Arterton continues to travel around the globe to teach about democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Dr. Christopher Arterton with heartfelt congratulations on a job well done for GWU and our country.

CITIZEN CONCERN ABOUT CONGRESS PASSING A RESPONSIBLE BUDGET

HON. JASON T. SMITH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following response to a letter from a concerned citizen.

DEAR MR. MCANULTY: Thank you for contacting me with your concerns about Congress passing a responsible budget. I appreciate the time you took to reach out to me on this important issue. In my first few days in Congress, I introduced H. J. Res. 49, which is an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would require an annual balanced budget. I believe that the federal government, like families throughout Missouri, should only spend what it has.

On December 12, 2013 the House of Representatives voted on a budget compromise that set spending levels for the next two years. While I believe Congress must pass a budget, I ultimately could not support this compromise plan that immediately raised new revenues without giving immediate attention to Washington's spending addiction and our massive national debt. We must start paying down our national debt.

Another reason I voted against the budget compromise were the changes made to veteran's benefits. Our men and women in uniform deserve unwavering support from every Member of Congress and all Americans. It is wrong to balance budgets on the backs of troops who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way so that we can all be free. The livelihood of our troops should not be negotiable.

While I appreciate the time and effort that went into crafting this budget deal, I could not support this plan because it immediately increases spending without immediately reducing the deficit. Simply put this agreement raises revenue and spends more money.

Again, I appreciate the time you have taken to reach out to me. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any additional questions or concerns. I am honored to have the opportunity to represent the Eighth Congressional District of Missouri and encourage you to visit my website at www.jasonsmith.house.gov/contact/newsletter to sign up for my e-newsletter and receive regular updates from Washington, DC.

HONORING KATHRYN MOIRA HAYES

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kathryn Moira Hayes for her thirty years of service to the people of Sonoma County in both the public and private sector. Ms. Hayes has been an honorable and effective advocate for the community in which she lives, for Sonoma County's business community and for all those in need.

Ms. Hayes' leadership of the North Bay Board of Realtors (NORBAR) over the last sixteen years has grown the organization to serve over 3,000 members in Lake, Mendocino, Napa and Sonoma Counties. During her tenure, NORBAR has been known not only for a high degree of professionalism and dedication to its members, the industry and community, but also for promoting professional standards and ethics, and seeking to preserve property rights and services of importance.

Prior to joining the North Bay Association of Realtors, Kathy was a member of my district staff for six years, responsible for district and field activities in Sonoma and Mendocino counties. During her time on my staff, she was a tireless advocate for constituents. In particular, I commend her work on issues related to Leaking Underground Storage Tanks, which was critical to maintaining a healthy community in our district.

Ms. Hayes' catalog of community involvement and achievements is far too prolific to list here. She is a past President of the Santa Rosa Education Cooperative Board and past Chair of the Board for the Sonoma County Chapter of the American Red Cross, as well as a current member of the Board for Habitat for Humanity of Sonoma County. She has received numerous prestigious awards, including the George Escofie Distinguished Board Service Award from the American Red Cross, the Sonoma County Spirit Award from the

Sonoma County Economic Development Board and the Gerald Hathaway Memorial Award for Significant Contributions to Chamber of Commerce Management in California.

In her spare time, Kathy is a master chef, a classically trained musician, and a graceful leader who builds consensus for every effort of which she is a part. Kathy has been a valuable contributor to her community for her entire life. But her most noted and beloved role is that of mother to her two sons.

Mr. Speaker, it is fitting and proper that we honor Kathryn Moira Hayes at this time. She has been a model citizen and leader in Sonoma County and her presence has enriched the lives of all those in our community.

HONORING THE ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS, DIVISION 39

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor The Ancient Order of Hibernians, Division 39, proudly celebrating their 125th anniversary in May, 2014. Their motto of Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity can be seen throughout the division's history, from helping Irish immigrants obtain work in the early 1870's to the present day, by awarding scholarships, holding fundraisers for those in need and collecting thousands of dollars and much needed supplies for those in New York and New Jersey who were devastated by super storm Sandy.

In 1884 Irish immigrants built and attended St. Leo's Catholic Church, which still stands today. In 1885 an Irishman and Hibernian, Frank Jordan, built the Tacony Music Hall, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. Today ancestors of the Irish immigrant families still reside in the Tacony area of Philadelphia. During the 1950's and 1960's many more divisions of the Ancient Order of Hibernians were started in Philadelphia and surrounding areas and Division 39 lost members. By the late 1960's when there were less than 50 members remaining, the officers and members undertook a revitalization of this once great division. By the early 1980's Division 39 had over 300 members, and by the mid 1990's there were over 900 members, making Division 39 the largest in the country. As of today the membership remains at approximately 750 members.

Some of the annual functions at the division are the communion breakfast, Veterans Day mass and social, children's Christmas party, mass before the St. Patrick's Day parade and post parade party, awarding of scholarships based on a written essay, three scholarship awards on Thanksgiving Day to Father Judge High School football players, erection and dismantling of the Christmas crèche in downtown Philadelphia, the annual chili cook off and membership drive and weekly crab night. These events are only some of the ways the Division 39 gives back to the community.

I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in congratulating The Ancient Order of Hibernians, Division 39, on its 125th anniversary of serving the Tacony community.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was $10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is $17,447,321,527,551.15. We've added $6,820,444,478,638.07 to our debt in 5 years. This is over $6.8 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF KAMERON GRUBAUGH ON HIS OFFER OF APPOINTMENT TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to an outstanding student from Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. I am pleased to announce that Kameron Grubaugh of Convoy, Ohio has accepted an offer of appointment to the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York.

Kameron's offer of appointment poises him to attend the United States Military Academy this fall with the incoming Class of 2018. Attending one of our nation's military academies is an invaluable experience that offers a world-class education, while placing demands on those who undertake one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lives.

Kameron brings an enormous amount of leadership, service, and dedication to the incoming Class of 2018. While attending Crestview High School in Convoy, Ohio, Kameron was on the Honor/Merit Roll and was a member of the Red/Blue Club and National Honor Society.

Throughout high school, Kameron played soccer and football, earning a varsity letter in football and led the Ohio Extreme Soccer Club as team captain. In addition, Kameron was a member of the Model United Nations, Van Wert County Historical Society Junior Curator, and attended Buckeye Boys State. I am confident that Kameron will carry the lessons of his student and athletic leadership to the Military Academy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Kameron Grubaugh on the acceptance of his appointment to the United States Military Academy. Our service academies offer the finest military training and education available. I am positive that Kameron will excel during his career at the Military Academy, and I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their best wishes to him as he begins his service to the Nation.

RECOGNIZING AND CONGRATULATING THE CUBA NEW YORK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ON ITS 100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. TOM REED

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate the Cuba, New York Chamber of Commerce on its 100th anniversary. Over the past 100 years, the Chamber has successfully provided small businesses and local entrepreneurs with the resources, expertise, and advice needed to succeed.

The town of Cuba is stronger and more vibrant because of the Chamber. This organization has proven to be an invaluable resource for promoting local businesses by providing them with opportunities for growth. The Chamber brings businesses together, creating strong economic bonds and partnerships between its members. In addition, it provides referrals that are crucial to many businesses in the area. Due to the Chamber's unrelenting work in assisting commerce, local businesses continue to provide well-paying jobs and high-quality products and services to our region.

The Chamber is also a strong advocate for local tourism. It supports local events and industries that attract visitors to Allegany County, including a wide variety of agritourism and outdoor activities.

Once again I wish to congratulate the Cuba, New York Chamber of Commerce on 100 successful years of service and I look forward to the great contributions it will continue to make to New York's 23rd Congressional District.

THE INTRODUCTION OF A RESOLUTION MARKING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce a resolution marking the 60th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision of Brown v. Board of Education, which was handed down on May 17, 1954. This case was a landmark decision for the 20th century civil rights movement and a turning point for our nation.

Brown overturned 58 years of a ''separate but equal'' policy established in Plessy v. Ferguson that was anything but equal. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote in the Court's unanimous opinion that even if facilities are equal with respect to buildings, curricula, qualifications and salaries of teachers, and other ''tangible'' factors, that the effect of segregation, the very concept itself, meant that separate facilities could never be equal facilities. The Court ruled: ''Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal'' and, consequently, ''segregation is a denial of the equal protection of the laws.'' After this decision, access to public facilities could never again be denied on the basis of race.

The decision was a victory for the mid-century civil rights movement that also led to legislative pushes which drastically changed the

outlook of race relations in America: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act, and the Fair Housing Act. Brown helped level the playing field for all Americans regardless of race.

While the battle over segregation continued at the state level for many years afterward, and our nation still today has many civil rights issues to address, Brown remains a moment of historical significance that ushered our country to contemporary standards of humanity and compassion. As we mark this important milestone in our nation's history, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

135TH BIRTHDAY OF NANNIE HELEN BURROUGHS

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the House of Representatives to join me in celebrating the 135th birthday of Nannie Helen Burroughs and in recognizing her many contributions to our nation, and especially the District of Columbia. Ms. Burroughs was born on May 2, 1879, and in 1975, Mayor Walter Washington declared May 10 ''Nannie Helen Burroughs Day'' in D.C.

Born in Orange, Virginia, Ms. Burroughs moved to Washington with her mother when she was five years old. In 1896, Ms. Burroughs graduated with honors from M Street School, now Dunbar High School. She proceeded to make immeasurable contributions to our city and country as an educator, civil rights advocate and religious leader.

Ms. Burroughs was launched onto the national scene in 1900 with her speech at the National Baptist Convention in Richmond, Virginia, ''Hindering the Women from Helping,'' about giving women a greater role in the church. Her speech led to the establishment of the Women's Convention to the National Baptist Convention and her selection as its secretary. Ms. Burroughs held this position until 1947, when she was elected president and served in that capacity until her death in 1961.

Ms. Burroughs' signature achievement was the founding of the National Training School for Negro Women and Girls in the Deanwood Area of Washington, D.C. in 1909, where she served as its principal until her death in 1961. The school would later be renamed the Nannie Helen Burroughs School and remained in operation until 2013.

Ms. Burroughs contributed to many other parts of the nation, including: establishing a Negro women's industrial club—the first of its kind—in Louisville, Kentucky in 1898; serving as keynote speaker at the first Baptist World Alliance Congress in London, England in 1905; establishing Woman's Day in the Baptist Church in 1907, while a member of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church in D.C.; giving the commencement speech at Tuskegee Institute in 1934—the first woman to do so; serving on the listeners' advisory panel of the National Broadcasting Company; and giving a radio address to the nation and soldiers fighting abroad men abroad in 1943. She was also a primary force in establishing the Frederick Douglass House Museum. Most recently, in 2012, Mrs. Burroughs was posthumously awarded membership in the American Automobile Association—a benefit which had been denied in 1930.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Nannie Helen Burroughs for a life of committed service to our children. Her legacy continues to offer a powerful example for how we should conduct our lives and strive to teach the next generation.

IN RECOGNITION OF NEW MEXICO SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF'S ACADEMIC BOWL TEAM

HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to acknowledge the success of the Academic Bowl Team at the New Mexico School for the Deaf. This impressive group of students travelled to Austin, Texas earlier this year to take part in the Regional Academic Bowl Competition, a tournament measuring contestants in different areas of knowledge. Over the course of matches consisting of three one-hour rounds, competitors were tested on their knowledge of the humanities, sciences, current events, deaf studies, and many other disciplines.

For the first time in school history, the NMSD team won the Regional Competition, going undefeated in all eight of their matches. Their winning performance earned them a trip to the national competition, held annually here in Washington, D.C. at Gallaudet University, the first university in the world founded to give instruction specifically to the deaf and hard of hearing. The team continued its run of excellence at the highest level by winning three out of five of matches on the first day of competition. On day two, NMSD won its first match before a loss in the playoffs eliminated them from competition.

This impressive performance was a result of hard work, dedication and perseverance, and is a source of pride for the state of New Mexico. The team features a diverse group of students from different backgrounds, hailing from different parts of the Land of Enchantment, along with one exchange student—Kalle Lovgren—from Sweden. Two of the NMSD team members, Jasmine Sisneros and Tyrel Wilding, were selected as All-Stars for the entire Southwest Region. These fine young students, together with teammates Augusta Skoog, Hadassah Aguilar-Davis, and former National Most Outstanding Player Paige Foreman, who rejoined the team for the national competition, performed brilliantly through the Academic Bowl Competition.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the NMSD Academic Bowl Team and their coaches, Scott Vollmar and Nate Harrison, on all their success.

IN RECOGNITION OF FATHER OWEN J. MULLEN

HON. DUNCAN HUNTER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Father Owen J. Mullen, a dedicated member of my Service Academy Selection Committee and an outstanding person who will be celebrating 50 years service as a Catholic Priest on May 16, 2014.

Born in Troy, New York in 1938, Father Mullen attended Mount St. Mary's University and Seminary for eight years in Emmitsburg, Maryland before being ordained a priest for the Wilmington Diocese in Delaware on May 16, 1964. He was then sent to Villanova University in Philadelphia in order to obtain a Masters Degree in Educational Administration and it was here that he worked for the next 17 years serving as both a teacher and a high school administrator. Following Villanova, Father Mullen became Pastor of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Chestertown, Maryland.

Aside from serving in his church, Father Mullen also proudly served our nation. In 1968, he was commissioned a First Lieutenant in the Delaware National Guard and in 1979 was transferred into the Army Reserves where he was stationed at the United States Military Academy Admission Office counseling candidates for West Point. During the summer he also served as a Chaplain for the incoming Cadets at Beast Barracks and continued doing so for the next 20 years. In 1981, Father Mullen accepted a position to become Associate Chaplain at the University of San Diego until 1989.

Father Mullen was again invited to serve our nation's young military cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point as an active duty Army Lieutenant Colonel Catholic Cadet Chaplain for the United States Corps of Cadets, where he served from 1989–1997. Father Mullen was then promoted to full Colonel and assigned as the Senior Army Chaplain in Hawaii.

Despite retiring on August 31, 2001, as a Colonel in the US Army after 30 years of active and reserve service, Father Mullen continued his service by becoming Pastor at Holy Family Parish and Academy until June 2004. He then returned to the University of San Diego as a University Chaplain with a multitude of responsibilities, including Chaplain for the Football, Baseball, Basketball Teams and the Lacrosse Club. Father Mullen also found the time to serve as an Advisor to the Phi Kappa Theta Fraternity and recently became the twenty-fourth alumnus to be elected as Phi Kappa Theta's Fraternity President.

During his time in San Diego, Father Mullen has served as a member of the Service Academy Selection Committee for both me and my father, former Congressman Duncan L. Hunter. In this capacity he has provided much needed insight and guidance to many young men and women as they prepared for careers in the military.

The common theme throughout Father Mullen's career has been one word—service. As Father Mullen knows well, Jesus taught his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew, ''But the greatest among you shall be your servant.'' This biblical principle has been the standard to Father Mullen's approach to any request, challenge or need, and we have all benefitted from his commitment to this standard. I ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating and thanking Father Mullen for his 50 years of service to both his community and our nation.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF THOMAS HECKMAN ON HIS OFFER OF APPOINTMENT TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to an outstanding student from Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. I am pleased to announce that Thomas Heckman of Toledo, Ohio has been offered an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Evan's offer of appointment poises him to attend the United States Air Force Academy this fall with the incoming Class of 2018. Attending one of our nation's military academies not only offers the opportunity to serve our country but also guarantees a world-class education, while placing demands on those who undertake one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lives.

Thomas brings an enormous amount of leadership, service, and dedication to the incoming Class of 2018. While attending E.L. Bowsher High School in Toledo, Ohio, Thomas was a member of the Spanish club, student council, yearbook, and National Honor Society.

Throughout high school, Thomas was a member of his school's soccer, cross country and track and field teams and earned varsity letters in all three sports. Thomas also volunteered with Safe-T–City all four years of high school. I am confident that Thomas will carry the lessons of his student and athletic leadership to the Air Force Academy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Thomas Heckman on the offer of his appointment to the United States Air Force Academy. Our service academies offer the finest military training and education available. I am positive that Thomas will excel during his career at the Air Force Academy, and I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their best wishes to him as he begins his service to the Nation.

MISS INDIAN WORLD—TAYLOR THOMAS

HON. MICHAEL K. SIMPSON

OF IDAHO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Taylor Thomas on her achievement of being crowned the 2014–2015 Miss Indian World. The competition was recently held at the University of New Mexico Arena in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where each contestant was judged on public speaking, personal interview, traditional representation, and dance/essay.

Ms. Thomas resides in my congressional district at Fort Hall and is a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. She qualified for the national competition by being named Miss Shoshone-Bannock Queen this past year. It is truly an honor for me to recognize Ms. Thomas for her national accomplishments and as a role model in the Fort Hall community. She will make an excellent representative of Native American culture throughout her tenure as Miss Indian World.

Not only is Ms. Thomas a respected ambassador of the Fort Hall community, but she also attends Idaho State University, where she is majoring in political science. I have no doubt that her commitment to higher education played an important role in the competition, as her personal interview was the strongest of any competitor. Ms. Thomas has also been an advocate for Native Youth programs and indigenous language preservation, which are important components of Shoshone-Bannock culture.

I wish Ms. Thomas well as she travels across the United States in her role as Miss Indian World. It is a great honor for the Fort Hall community, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and my congressional district to have such a talented young woman represent her community on a world stage.

BILL ADAMS: PITTSBURGH INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAW ASSOCIATION'S 2014 INVENTOR OF THE YEAR

HON. MIKE KELLY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. KELLY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Mr. Bill Adams on having been named the 2014 Inventor of the Year by the Pittsburgh Intellectual Property Law Association. This award honors living inventors whose patented inventions have had a significant impact on the economy, social well-being, and the advancement of technology.

After returning from military service in Vietnam, Bill Adams worked in the Pittsburgh Public Schools as an elementary school librarian. In the late 1970s, Bill inherited $10,000, resigned from his job and built Adams Manufacturing into the $50 million-plus enterprise it is today.

As the Founder and Chairman of Adams Manufacturing, Bill has contributed to progressing the design and use of a number of consumer products, such as suction cups, outdoor resin furniture, and holiday accessories. Founded in 1976, Adams Manufacturing is headquartered in Portersville, Pennsylvania, and celebrates American ingenuity by ensuring that their products are "Made in the USA."

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me in recognizing Mr. Adams' contributions to Western Pennsylvania and American manufacturing.

TRIBUTE TO MISS MILLMAN, MR. DOWGIN, MISS VALLAD, & MISS DAVANZO

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lana Millman, Matthew Dowgin, Anna Vallad, and Amanda Davanzo for their dedication and hard work for the people of Colorado's Sixth District as interns in my Washington, DC office for the spring 2014 session.

The work of these young men and women has been exemplary and I know they all have bright futures. They served as tour guides, interacted with constituents, and learned a great deal about our nation's legislative process. I was glad to be able to offer this educational opportunity to these four and look forward to seeing them build their careers in public service.

All four of our interns have made plans to continue their work in public service next year with various organizations in both Colorado and Washington. I am certain they will succeed in their new roles and wish them all the best in their future endeavors. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize Lana Millman, Matthew Dowgin, Anna Vallad, and Amanda Davanzo for their service this spring.

4TH ANNUAL JUNIOR INVITATIONAL AT SAGE VALLEY GOLF CLUB

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, last weekend, I had the opportunity of attending the Sage Valley Golf Club in Graniteville, South Carolina, for the 4th Annual Junior Invitational at Sage Valley Golf Club. This spectacular event featured 54 of the top junior golfers from around the world coming together to compete at this prestigious championship. In just four short years, this tournament has quickly become heralded as one of the premier events in world of junior golf.

Congratulations to Scottie Scheffler, of Dallas, Texas, on his victory at this year's championship. Scottie's 54-hole total of 5-under par, 211, was one-shot clear of Cameron Champ, of Sacramento, California, who finished second.

This tournament, which brings juniors from around the country and world together for a unique experience, is the vision of the Club's founder, Weldon Wyatt. Mr. Wyatt is to be congratulated on this immensely successful tournament. The great golf legend Gary Player even made an appearance at this year's event. Each year golf enthusiasts will look forward to attending next year's championship, which provides extraordinary opportunities for young golfers worldwide.

IN SPECIAL RECOGNITION OF BRYANT SCHLADE ON HIS OFFER OF APPOINTMENT TO ATTEND THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY

HON. ROBERT E. LATTA

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay special tribute to an outstanding young man from Ohio's Fifth Congressional District. I am happy to announce

that Bryant Schlade of Napoleon, Ohio has been offered an appointment to attend the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Bryant's offer of appointment poises him to attend the United States Naval Academy this fall with the incoming Class of 2018. Attending one of our Nation's military academies is an invaluable experience that offers a world-class education while placing demands on those who undertake one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of their lives.

Bryant brings an enormous amount of leadership, service, and dedication to the incoming Class of 2018. While attending Napoleon High School, in Napoleon, Ohio, Bryant was on the Honor Roll and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Throughout high school, Bryant was a member of his school's football, basketball, and track and field teams and earned varsity letters in all three sports. In addition, Bryant served as captain of the football and basketball teams his senior year. He was class president, member of the student council, Spanish Club member, Envirothon, and volunteered his time as an usher at church. I am confident that Bryant will carry the lessons of his student and athletic leadership to the Naval Academy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Bryant Schlade on the acceptance of his appointment to the United States Naval Academy. Our service academies offer the finest military training and education available. I am positive that Bryant will excel during his career at the Naval Academy and I ask my colleagues to join me in extending their best wishes to him as he begins his service to the Nation.

HONORING DR. RAY ANN HAVASY

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Ray Ann Havasy, an esteemed resident of my congressional district. Not only is she an active and vocal member of her community in Port Washington, she is also the Director of the Center for Science Teaching and Learning, a valuable and necessary organization on Long Island.

The Center for Science Teaching and Learning exists to promote science education and literacy in children and adults. They accomplish this by holding workshops that engage our youth and challenge them to pursue their education inside and outside of the classroom.

Dr. Havasy, along with CSTL, has made an effort to promote S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) learning through local competitions that challenge participants to think critically about their studies and allow them to sharpen their knowledge in an applicable manner. The efforts of CSTL represent the type of innovative, out-of-the-box thinking we need to ensure that our children's academic competence remains that of a global leader.

Dr. Havasy and the Center for Science Teaching and Learning represent a positive institution in our community and I applaud their work. I am honored to be able to represent them here in Congress.

REMEMBERING JOHN BENINCASA

HON. TIM RYAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remember and honor the exemplary life and service of John Benincasa. John sadly passed away on April 6, 2014 at the age of 87.

Affectionately known as ''Mr. Alliance'' to those in his community, John was an extraordinary civil servant and veteran who served as president of the Alliance City Council and dedicated himself to the people of Stark County. On the day of his passing, John was in his 11th consecutive term as City Council president.

After graduating from Mount Union College, John worked as vice president and general manager of Da-Tronics Inc. He later became the City of Alliance Safety Service Director for much of the 1980s under then Mayor Francis Carr.

John was an active volunteer for his community, including 12 years on the Alliance Park board. John also spent 13 years in the Alliance Jaycees as a Board Member, where he helped organize and manage the Carnation City Triathlon/Duathlon for 25 years. John was also an active member of the United Methodist Church and the Alliance Area Family YMCA.

He was an exemplary civil servant, who was able to set aside partisan differences and work for the betterment of the city he loved. John will be honored by the Stark County Democratic Party posthumously with the lifetime achievement award. He was devoted to his family and faith, and was dedicated to and strongly preached the principles of the Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to honor the life of John Benincasa. I extend my most sincere condolences to John's entire family. His contributions to this community will not be forgotten. Northeast Ohio is a better place because of his service and his life. I ask that the House join me in remembering Mr. John Benincasa.

HONORING THE ETZ CHAIM CENTER ON THEIR 25TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. ALLYSON Y. SCHWARTZ

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. SCHWARTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the work of The Etz Chaim Center on the occasion of their anniversary this June, marking 25 years of providing quality Jewish education from a spiritual perspective to the Delaware Valley. Etz Chaim is a welcoming, non-judgmental organization dedicated to bringing the beauty and depth of Judaism to the contemporary Jew. Through a diverse menu of educational and spiritually-focused programs, Jews of all backgrounds are able to grow and connect more passionately with their heritage. Based in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, in my Congressional district, Etz Chaim provides programming for Jews and families in Montgomery County and the Philadelphia area.

Etz Chaim was founded in 1988 by Rabbi Dovid Wachs and Rabbi Moshe Ungar in Northeast Philadelphia. Since then, both their space and their programs have grown. Etz Chaim's new headquarters in Elkins Park opened in 2012, allowing them to expand their numerous class, forum, and event offerings, providing hundreds of educational and spiritual programs for the community. Each year, Etz Chaim reaches almost 1,000 people, from community based events attended by many, to one on one learning sessions for individuals looking to advance their personal growth.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating the 25th anniversary of Etz Chaim and all of their success in supporting the Jewish community in Pennsylvania.

HONORING CHARLES WILLIAM RANSOME

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Charlie Ransome who served our country for 23 years in the United States Army. I had the great privilege of knowing Charlie, and today I am including in the Congressional Record a tribute to him so that my colleagues will know how much he contributed to the nation, to his community, to his friends, and to his family.

Charles William ''Charlie'' Ransome, 49 years of age, passed away peacefully at his home in Sugar Land, Texas on November 30, 2012, after a courageous seven month battle with pancreatic cancer.

A celebration of Charlie's life was held at a funeral mass at St. Laurence Catholic Church in Sugar Land, Texas on Friday, December 7, 2012. He was buried in Houston National Cemetery with full military honors, as was his wish. Serving as pallbearers were Michael Ransome, Bobby Balli, Terry Ray, Adrian Janak, David Ragusa, Richard Whitworth, Bill McLaughlin, and Jim Allen.

Charlie is survived by his beloved wife and son, Melinda Janak Ransome and Charles Zachary Ransome of Sugar Land, Texas. Also surviving him are his parents Rufus G. Ransome, Jr. and Jeanine Calderoni Ransome of Brownsville, Texas; his sister, Kathryn Anne Traynor (Frank) and nieces Sarah, Emily, and Rebecca of Houston, Texas; his brother, Michael Edward Ransome (Denise) and nephew Joshua and niece Olivia of Scottsdale, Arizona.

Additional survivors include his uncle, Charles Fount Ray and cousins Sandy and Karen Ray, Marshall and Mary Lou Ray, and Terry and Laurie Ray, all of Brownsville, Texas; and his uncle and aunt, William S. McLaughlin, Jr. and Doris Calderoni McLaughlin, and cousins Mary Leigh McLaughlin, Grayson Tate, and William S. McLaughlin, III, all of Houston, Texas.

Charlie was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents, Rufus G. Ransome and Kathryn Eidman Ransome; maternal grandparents, Dr. Charles F. Calderoni and Doris Thompson Calderoni; and his aunt Ann Ransome Ray.

Charlie was born on June 7, 1963, in Brownsville, Texas, to Rufus G. Ransome, Jr.

and Jeanine Calderoni Ransome. He graduated from St. Joseph Academy in 1981 and Texas A&M University in 1985 earning a degree in civil engineering. While at Texas A&M Charlie proudly served as a member of the Corps of Cadets. He went on to serve 23 years in the U.S. Army and active reserves, retiring in 2008 as a Lieutenant Colonel. Charlie served tours of duty in Germany and Korea immediately out of college and was deployed to Iraq in 2004 with the Army Corps of Engineers as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While in Iraq Charlie managed logistics for the military's construction efforts and troop rotations and served as a special investigating officer. He was awarded the Bronze Star for his time in Iraq. Charlie believed very strongly that his years of his service in the military were his contribution to making a better world. Patriotism was a way of life for him. He closed all his communications with the following quotation from Edmund Burke (1729—1797): "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

In 1991, Charlie married Melinda Janak. They were blessed with the birth of their son, Charles Zachary, in 1996. Charlie spent 21 beautiful years with his beloved Melinda and 16 with his beloved Zachary. The family loved to travel especially to all the wonderful National Parks where Charlie marveled at the natural beauty that God created.

Charlie's civilian engineering career was spent with Jacobs Engineering, in Houston, Texas where he was employed for 24 years. Always a giving man, Charlie was active in volunteerism both through Jacobs and his son's activities. Some of his favorite contributions were running United Way campaigns for Jacobs, reading to under privileged children and serving as treasurer for his son's high school athletics booster club.

Charlie was a man of great integrity, with the highest of moral standards. He was truly a family man, always loving to have his family and friends join him, Melinda, and Zach to celebrate at their home. An avid sportsman, hunting, fishing and scuba diving were some of his favorite pastimes.

Charlie treasured his wonderful life and lived it to the fullest. He will always be remembered as a very kind and compassionate man who loved people. In turn, Charlie was loved by everyone who knew him, as was evidenced by the tremendous outpouring of love, care and support from family and his many friends throughout his illness and passing.

We treasure the years Charlie spent with us. He will forever live in our hearts. May he rest in peace.

TRIBUTE TO HONOR MR. RAMON RIVERA

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. REICHERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mr. Ramon Rivera from Malaga, Washington. Mr. Rivera is the founder of the Mariachi Huenachi program at Wenatchee High School and also the director of that remarkable music group. Recently, he was honored by the Seattle City Club with one of the 2014 Washington State Jefferson Awards.

The Jefferson Award is an award for "unsung heroes" who have committed themselves to volunteer service and improving the lives of those around them, and, in doing so, improving the world. So far, over 300 students have participated in the mariachi program pioneered by Mr. Rivera, a program which has received national attention. Not only do his students learn about the rich cultural heritage of mariachi music but they are also expected to achieve academic excellence and are encouraged to pursue higher educations, something that many of Mr. Rivera's students would never have considered otherwise.

I am honored to have met Mr. Rivera during the Spring Recess and am even more honored to represent him as my constituent. I congratulate him on the success of his endeavors and earning this prestigious recognition.

THE CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF INDIANAPOLIS TO RECEIVE THE NATIONAL MEDAL FOR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICE

HON. SUSAN W. BROOKS

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, who is being awarded the prestigious National Medal for Museum and Library Service from the Institute of Museum and Library Services on May 8, 2014. This award recognizes "institutions that make significant and exceptional contributions to their communities" and is highly selective, as only ten institutions receive the award annually. It is also the highest award any American museum or library can receive.

The largest children's museum in the world, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis has been a mainstay of Indianapolis' cultural landscape since its founding in 1925, and is recognized as the global leader of museums for children. Among its many renowned permanent exhibits are a recreation of the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh Seti I, a forty-three foot glass masterpiece by the famed artist Dale Chihuly, the SpaceQuest Planetarium where children can view and understand the Indiana night sky, and a working carousel from 1917. There is also the Dinosphere, which displays full-size dinosaur skeletons, including Leonardo the mummified dinosaur. From May 10, 2014 through November 2, 2014, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis will be the only museum in the United States to display the famed Chinese Terra Cotta Warriors as part of its permanent exhibit "Take Me There: China."

As a longtime Indianapolis resident who raised two children in our beautiful city, I especially appreciate all that the Children's Museum does for Hoosier children every day of the year. During Halloween, the museum presents its famous Haunted House, and during the holiday season the main staircase is transformed into the magical Yule Slide. Like many Hoosier parents, I have fond memories of taking my children to the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, and was so moved by the museum's work that I was inspired to serve on its Board, which was one of the great honors of my career. I am pleased to continue working with the museum as a distinguished advisor helping to advance its important mission.

As a member of the Education and the Workforce Committee, I also want to acknowledge how important it is to our nation's future to encourage our children's curiosity and provide them with hands-on opportunities to learn about the world around them. The Children's Museum does just that, and undeniably inspires the more than one million visitors who come to experience the museum each year. I am proud to recognize the Children's Museum of Indianapolis today for its outstanding work in winning the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, and wish the museum continued success as it seeks to educate Indiana's children and families.

RECOGNIZING DR. DENNIS JOHNSON

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues in the House to join me in recognizing Dr. Dennis Johnson on his retirement from the George Washington University's (GWU) Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM). Dr. Johnson has committed more than 20 years of service to the GWU campus and will truly be missed there.

Dr. Johnson hails from a small town outside Merrillville, Indiana. In high school, he was very active in student government and politics. He earned his BA in International Relations from Carlton College and his Ph.D. in Political Science from Duke University. His academic and scholarly interests include campaigns and elections, the profession of political consulting, and the history of American public policy.

Dr. Johnson has over 20 years of teaching and leadership experience with GWU's GSPM program. Dr. Johnson has served in multiple leadership roles with the GSPM, ending his tenure as the Director of its Legislative Affairs Program, Associate Dean, and later as its Acting Executive Director. Notably, Dr. Johnson served as a Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer at Jinan University in Guangzhou, China during the 2010–2011 academic year, where he lectured and spoke to a variety of academic, professional, and business audiences throughout China. Dr. Johnson has authored numerous books on political management and has lectured on the subject around the globe. He has had a lifetime passion for politics. In addition to his academic career, Dr. Johnson earlier served as Chief of Staff to then Congressman Norman Sisisky (D–VA).

Dr. Johnson has done impressive work in advancing the cause of democracy around the globe. He epitomizes the American Dream, achieving success as a public school graduate and the first in his family to graduate from college. He earned money for his college tuition working summers in a steel mill. Coming from a small town to having had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to have tea with the Queen of England, Dennis has retained a sense of humility and Midwestern charm.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Dr. Dennis Johnson with sincere congratulations on a job well done for GWU and for advancing democracy around the world.

TRIBUTE TO RANGEVIEW HIGH SCHOOL CYBERPATRIOT TEAM

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Savannah Clemente, Jacob Johnson, Lucas Nicodemus, Luke Robinson, Nathan Teeter, and LeeAnn Wilson of Aurora, Colorado. Colorado was well represented by these Rangeview High School students at the 2014 CyberPatriot Competition National Finals in National Harbor, Maryland.

CyberPatriot is the premier national youth cyber defense competition that teaches high school and middle school students about cyber-safety and how to defend computer systems against cyberattack. It also teaches students about internships and careers in cybersecurity and other opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The Rangeview High School CyberPatriot team distinguished itself from the rest of the competing teams by demonstrating outstanding skills in three rigorous rounds of competition against their peers. Out of 1,500 competing teams, only 28 made it to the final competition where national championship trophies and scholarships were awarded. The Rangeview team won First Place in the Digital Crime Scene Challenge sponsored by the U.S. Cyber Crime Conference.

The Rangeview High School CyberPatriot students will undoubtedly go on to serve as innovative leaders in our country. Their fierce dedication to the STEM disciplines is critical to our nation's future. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to recognize the Rangeview High School CyberPatriot students for their achievement of competing in the 2014 CyberPatfiot Competition National Finals.

IN RECOGNITION OF DR. JULIET V. GARCÍA

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Juliet V. García president of the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB). Dr. García was recently named by CNN Money/Fortune as one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders—a list which includes Pope Francis, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Bono, and the Dalai Lama. Her leadership skills are an asset to Brownsville and South Texas.

Dr. García began her tenure as president of UTB in January 1992. Previously, she served as president of Texas Southmost College and was the first Mexican-American woman to become president of a college or university in the United States.

During Dr. García's tenure, she has relentlessly advocated for increasing access to higher education in South Texas, which is reflected in UTB's enrollment statistics. The UTB student body is 91% Hispanic and 71% are first-generation college students.

UTB has experienced tremendous growth under Dr. García's leadership. The school's budget has increased from $31.4 million to $145 million, classroom space has quadrupled and many new buildings have been constructed including: a library, a life and health sciences building, a student union, an education and business building, an early childhood learning center, a recreation center, a performing arts center, and two biomedical research buildings.

Currently, Dr. García is guiding UTB through a merger with the University of Texas-Pan American to create the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. Importantly, the new university, which will include a medical school, will have access to state oil and gas royalties through the permanent university fund.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to honor Dr. Juliet V. García., and I appreciate you joining me in recognizing her commitment to higher education.

RECOGNIZING THE 2013–2014 UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

HON. JACKIE WALORSKI

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mrs. WALORSKI. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to congratulate the 2013–2014 University of Notre Dame Lady Irish Women's Basketball team on their perfect regular season and exciting NCAA tournament run. The team finished the regular season with an unbeaten record of 29–0 and finished the post season winning the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament, as well as competing in their third straight NCAA National Championship game.

The Lady Irish were led by their head coach, Muffett McGraw and senior captains Kayla McBride, Natalie Achonwa, and Ariel Braker. These outstanding players led their team to 37 consecutive victories, the university's first ever regular season, the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament Championships, and a third consecutive National Championship game appearance. Altogether, the Lady Irish finished their first season in the ACC, the same way it ended its time in the Big East, with another dominating conference title.

In addition, the Irish earned several prestigious individual conference and national honors. Along with the 37 game winning streak, Conference Championship, and Final Four appearance, Coach McGraw earned a sweep of the AP, Naismith, Pat Summit, and US Basketball Writers Association for Coach of the Year awards. Along with Coach McGraw's amazing accomplishment, the team had three AP All-American's with Seniors Kayla McBride and Natalie Achonwa and Sophomore Jewell Loyd. The team also won numerous Atlantic Coast Conference awards including: Coach of the Year (Coach McGraw), Player of the Year, (Kayla McBride) and ACC tournament MVP (Jewell Loyd). Along with those ACC awards McBride, Loyd, and Achonwa each earned all-conference honors as well. The hard work and dedication by the players and coaches showed in both the individual awards and their dominating run to the National Championship game. This team will be one that is remembered forever in university history for years to come.

As a former basketball player and Representative of Notre Dame, it is my honor to recognize the hard work and success of the 2013–2014 Lady Irish Basketball team. The dedication, selflessness, and sportsmanship these student athletes display is a model for young Hoosiers throughout Indiana. On behalf of Indiana's Second Congressional District, I am proud to recognize the University of Notre Dame Lady Irish's perfect regular season and amazing tournament run and wish them continued future success.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TIM GRIFFIN

OF ARKANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, April 28, 2014, and Tuesday, April 29, 2014, I missed six votes as I was home in Arkansas dealing with the aftermath of the devastating storm that hit my district over the weekend.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote 178, the passage of H.R. 4192, "yea" on rollcall vote 179, the passage of H.R. 4120, "yea" on rollcall vote 180, the Previous Question, "yea" on rollcall vote 181, the Adoption of the rule for Expatriate Health Coverage Clarification, "yea" on rollcall vote 182, the passage of H.R. 4414, and "yea" on rollcall vote 183, the passage of H.R. 627, of which I am a cosponsor.

MERITORIOUS SERVICE CITATION FOR MG WILLIAM E. RAPP

HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" McKEON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Major General William E. Rapp.

Major General Rapp distinguished himself through exceptionally meritorious service from 1 August 2012 to 1 June 2014, while serving as the Chief of Army Legislative Liaison. During this period of extraordinary change, continued combat operations in Afghanistan, and significant fiscal constraints and challenges facing the Army, Major General Rapp implemented and fostered a significantly improved strategic partnership with the 113th Congress. He clearly understood the importance of Congressional oversight and spearheaded the execution of an Army strategy to enhance Congressional trust and confidence in Army programs, policies and operations. Major General Rapp did a truly outstanding job in dealing with some of the most complex issues the Army faced during the last two legislative cycles with unparalleled results, enabling the Army to receive the necessary authorities and resources to support combat operations, sustain the all-volunteer force and maintain the quality of life for Soldiers, their Families and Army Civilians. Major General Rapp's outstanding leadership, strategic vision, and keen judgment are in keeping with the finest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon him, the Office of the Army Legislative Liaison and the United States Army.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND CAREER OF SUE SWISHER

HON. CHERI BUSTOS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mrs. BUSTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to say a few words about Sue Swisher, a good friend of mine, and a true champion for the children of our region.

Sue will be retiring this summer, after more than twenty-four years leading the Child Abuse Council in Rock Island, Illinois. Sue joined the Child Abuse Council as Director of Programs in 1994, and became its Executive Director in 1998. Under her leadership, the Child Abuse Council has provided child-abuse treatment and prevention to hundreds of children and families in our region. During her tenure, Sue spearheaded the creation of programs designed to prevent child abuse, instead of just reacting to it, including teacher-training programs like Safe from the Start, and fatherhood classes like Boot Camp for Dads.

People learn lessons during childhood that stay with them their entire lives. Children can either learn about trust and respect, or they can learn about fear and insecurity. Sue Swisher has worked tirelessly to ensure that our children learn lessons about love and respect that will resonate throughout their lives. We will miss her steady hand, and thank her for her invaluable contribution to our community.

REMEMBERING JACK HARDESTY

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and remember Jack Hardesty, a longstanding community leader in Clarke County, Virginia, who passed away April 15, 2014 at the age of 82.

John Douglas ''Jack'' Hardesty's family has long standing ties to Clarke County dating back to the 1780s. He chose to continue this legacy as an entrepreneur who worked to further his community.

Jack may be best known for his work on the Board of Supervisors, serving 17 years as chairman. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Bank of Clarke County, was a trustee for his church and member of the Berryville-Clarke Chamber of Commerce. Jack was named ''Citizen of the Year'' this year by the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber for his lifetime of service.

Jack had an incredible impact on Clarke County, organizing the county's first Comprehensive Plan, as well as his efforts to preserve historic farmland and open space in the county. Through his work he has left an indelible mark on the look and feel of his community.

Jack's accomplishments in agriculture were also well known. He was recognized as the Outstanding Young Farmer for Virginia in 1955, and later as Distinguished Dairyman of the Year in 1986.

Jack is survived by his two sons, John and David, who are both part of his family dairy business. I know he will be missed dearly by both his family and the community as a whole.

I submit the following article from The Winchester Star of Mr. Hardesty's story.

[From the Winchester Star, Apr. 17, 2014]

COMMUNITY LEADER JACK HARDESTY DIES

(By Val Van Meter)

BERRYVILLE.—A man who is credited for shaping the way Clarke County looks today died Tuesday after a life of service.

John Douglas ''Jack'' Hardesty, 82, was an entrepreneur before that word was the height of compliment. But, while building his family's fortunes, he also aimed to do what was best for his community.

''He has had a tremendous influence on how the county looks and feels,'' said Michael Hobert, current chairman of the Board of Supervisors, a post Hardesty held for the better part of two decades.

''He was responsible for the county's first Comprehensive Plan,'' Hobert noted. That plan is the community's vision on how it wants to develop into the future.

''He helped to establish our identity, and we'll have that identity for a long time into the future.''

His support to institute sliding-scale zoning helped preserve farmland and open space in the county and set a tone that has continued today.

Hardesty's family roots in Clarke County go back to the 1780s, and farming was all he wanted to do.

In high school, his senior classmates predicted that, within 10 years of their 1950 graduation, he would be milking 100 head of Holsteins. They weren't far off the mark.

He formed a partnership with his father and began building Harvue Dairy, which grew from a 25-head, hand-milked herd to a diary producing millions of pounds of milk a year and shipping the genetics of its registered Holsteins all over the world.

His importance to agriculture was recognized in 1955, when he was named the Outstanding Young Farmer for Virginia, and it only continued to grow. In 1986 the Virginia State Dairyman's Association named him Distinguished Dairyman of the Year.

As a member of the Clarke County Ruritan Club, Hardesty was ''very instrumental'' in purchasing the land for the Clarke County Ruritan fairgrounds.

The purchase was arranged in 1960, said Billy Milleson, who chairs the annual Clarke County Fair for the Ruritan Club.

''He and his dad ran the dairy department at the fair for years,'' Milleson said.

He said Hardesty was one of the people who saved the fairgrounds when the Virginia Department of Transportation planned to put the Harry Byrd Highway bypass around Berryville. Their preferred route took it right through the fairgrounds, demolishing the grove of huge oak trees that give it so much of its character.

Hardesty, Milleson said, ''went to Richmond and got it changed.''

''He was an authentic man,'' Hobert added. He was genuine. He had integrity and good judgment.''

Former state Sen. Russell Potts Jr. called Hardesty the consummate gentleman.

''He was Mr. Clarke County,'' Potts said, adding that Hardesty got into political life ''for all the right reasons.''

In 1965, Hardesty was appointed to fill the unexpired term of the Russell Voting District representative Bob Withers on the Board of Supervisors.

A year later, he ran for election and won. He remained on the board for the next 29 years, serving 17 as chairman.

''The quality of life in Clarke County is a direct result of him insisting on high standards,'' Potts said. ''He loved preservation,'' and the beauty of Clarke County.

Milleson said one of Hardesty's greatest characteristics was that he was a good listener.

''He could see the other side,'' he added.

In 1963, the stockholders of the Bank of Clarke County selected him to serve on the board of directors. In 1986, he stepped into the chairmanship, replacing the late Eustace Jackson, who had also preceded Hardesty as chairman of the Clarke supervisors.

Johnny Milleson, president of the Bank of Clarke, recalled Hardesty was always proud of his county and the bank, which grew from two branches, one in Berryville and one in Boyce, to 11 branches, including nine in Winchester and Frederick County.

He said when the two attended a seminar in North Carolina one year, people in the room were announcing their names and how long they had been directors of their respective banks.

Most were less than five years, but one man was cheered for serving 21.

He said Hardesty winked at him before announcing he'd been on the board of the ''best little bank in the state of Virginia'' for 41 years at that time.

The bank president said Hardesty was ''a part of the bank family until his passing.''

At Christmas, Hardesty would circulate through all the bank branches. ''He had a kind word for everyone,'' and knew everyone.

He added that he had gone to school with Hardesty's older son, Johnny, and had known the elder Hardesty ''since I can remember. He always had time for you, no matter how busy he was.

And, he was a hard worker. Meetings of the Bank of Clarke's board still begin at 6:50 a.m., a custom started by Hardesty, to make sure he got a full day's work in, despite taking time out for meetings.

Running a farm, a bank and a county didn't take up all of Hardesty's time.

He was a trustee for his church, Crum's Church, a post also held by his father.

He helped direct the dairy industry through positions on several organizations, including past president of the Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative, the Virginia Holstein Association and the Virginia State Dairyman's Association.

Three Virginia governors appointed him to committees to advise them on the concerns of local governments.

He promoted the larger county economy through membership in the Berryville-Clarke County Chamber of Commerce. This year, the Top of Virginia Regional Chamber, which now represents Clarke County, named Hardesty its ''Citizen of the Year'' for his lifetime of service to the county.

He was married to Carter Conley Hardesty, who died in 2003, for 50 years. The couple have two sons, John E. and David M., who are both part of the family dairy business.

A funeral service is planned for 11 a.m. Tuesday at Duncan Memorial United Methodist Church in Berryville.

Potts recalled Hardesty protesting when he introduced a bill in the Virginia General Assembly to name a bridge for Jack and Carter Hardesty in the district he represented for so many years.

''I told him, 'You don't have any say in it,'" Potts recalled.

Then-Gov. Mark Warner and Sen. Charles ''Chuck'' Robb, along with former Sen. Harry F. Byrd Jr., all came for the ceremony, Potts recalled.

Both Democrats and Republicans respected Hardesty.

Said Potts, ''If you couldn't get along with Jack Hardesty, you couldn't get along with anyone.''

Contact Val Van Meter at vvanmeter@winchesterstar.com

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL DAY OF REASON

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing the National Day of Reason, which occurs this year on Thursday, May 1st.

As I see nations around the world in turmoil, among people of different religious faiths, we are moved to deeper appreciation for the Framers, who bequeathed us the Constitution, which requires the separation of church and state. We could not have built a vast nation of extraordinary religious and ethnic diversity were it not for our tolerance of the world's great religions, all of which exist among us in our nation today, and of Americans who claim no religion. I hope that all Americans—religious, non-religious and secular alike—will join in observing the National Day of Reason, today, May 1, 2014. This day provides an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the positive impacts on humanity of reason, critical thought and the scientific method, which have always been acknowledged to be consistent with religious faith, and to reaffirm that the line between religion and government must remain indelible.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing the National Day of Reason.

RECOGNIZING DR. DAVID SKORTON

HON. TOM REED

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. REED. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Dr. David Skorton on his recent appointment as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. Dr. Skorton, who currently serves as the 12th President of Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York, will begin his tenure as the 13th Secretary of the Smithsonian in July 2015.

Dr. Skorton was chosen for this position based on his outstanding merit and impressive leadership record. He has extensive experience as an administrator, cardiologist, and biomedical researcher. Dr. Skorton brings his unique talent and knowledge base to his new position, where he will be the first physician to lead the Smithsonian.

A staunch advocate of the arts, sciences, and humanities, Dr. Skorton will effectively promote the Smithsonian Institution's mission of supporting the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." I am confident that his skills, experience, and expertise will serve Dr. Skorton well in his efforts to oversee the immense collection of museums and research centers that comprise the Smithsonian Institution.

I commend Dr. Skorton on earning this remarkable opportunity and I look forward to the new heights that the Smithsonian Institution will reach under his leadership.

COMMENDING STUDENTS ON RECEIVING MILITARY ACADEMY APPOINTMENTS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate 10 students from the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas who received appointments to America's military academies. The students who receive appointments to our nation's prestigious military academies are some of the best and brightest students in America. They bring enormous pride to our communities. It's an honor to recognize these young leaders who have committed to protect and defend our nation through service in our military academies.

The students selected to represent our district include: Joshua Xu of Seven Lakes High School in Katy (U.S. Naval Academy), Cy Payne of Seven Lakes High School in Katy (U.S. Naval Academy), David Hernandez, III of Pearland High School in Pearland (U.S. Military Academy), William Waters of Cinco Ranch High School in Katy (U.S. Military Academy), Morgan Landers of Strake Jesuit College Preparatory from Houston (U.S. Military Academy), Brittany Scofield of Seven Lakes High School in Katy (U.S. Military Academy), Chad Cleary of Stephen F. Austin High School in Sugar Land (U.S. Merchant Marine Academy), Drake Dentry of Pearland High School in Pearland (U.S. Merchant Marine Academy), Nicholas Supry of Seven Lakes High School in Katy (U.S. Merchant Marine Academy) and Jonah Sanjay Bhide of American Embassy School, New Delhi, India (U.S. Air Force Academy).

As a former Navy pilot, I know that these students are about to embark on a tremendous citizenship experience. On behalf of all of the residents of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, I'm thrilled to congratulate these young leaders. I'm confident they will honorably serve our nation with pride and distinction.

RECOGNIZING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF PATIENT SERVICES INCORPORATED

HON. ERIC CANTOR

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize the accomplishments of Patient Services Incorporated (PSI) and to congratulate the organization on its 25 years of assisting Americans obtain the treatments and therapies they need. PSI is a national non-profit patient assistance charitable organization, headquartered in my Congressional district in Midlothian, Virginia. PSI has provided assistance to countless Americans in all 50 states and serves as a vital safety-net charity to help meet the needs of Americans suffering from expensive rare and chronic diseases.

Through PSI's leadership and determination, our nation's most vulnerable seniors are now able to access the treatments and care they need with the financial help of non-profit charitable organizations. I have visited with the devoted staff at PSI in the past, toured their campus, and I am proud to have PSI headquartered in my district.

PSI was founded out of the professional and personal experience of Dana Kuhn, a former Presbyterian Minister from Jackson, Tennessee. While employed as a clinical counselor at now VCU Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, Dana Kuhn encountered families devastated by chronic illnesses. Dr. Kuhn founded PSI in an effort to help this underserved community, and since then PSI has focused on finding solutions to the challenges facing the chronically ill.

Today I would like to congratulate PSI on its 25 years of helping Americans access medical treatments and therapies. In particular, I commend its Founder and President, Dana Kuhn, on his service to our country and his fellow man by creating this charitable organization.

RECOGNIZING AMBASSADOR PETER AMMON

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Dr. Peter Ammon as he leaves his post as Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United States. His hard work and dedication to strengthening the economic and cultural relationship between Germany and the United States must be commended.

In his role as Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Ammon strengthened the strong ties that bind Germany and the United States. Within the U.S., he visited 45 states and met with ordinary Americans, Governors, State Legislators, Members of Congress, and local elected officials. He also helped establish the German residence as an icon of German culture by featuring art crafted by U.S. and German artists on a rotating basis. The National Day parties hosted at the residence drew more than 3,500 guests, who enjoyed German art and food.

Dr. Ammon has championed the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership both as German Ambassador and for nearly 20 years prior because he knows this groundbreaking trade agreement will create jobs and growth on both sides of the Atlantic. Dr. Ammon leaves his post in Washington with the United States and Europe taking great strides toward finishing these tough, but necessary negotiations.

Dr. Ammon has served as German Ambassador to the United States since 2011. Previously, he served as Ambassador to Paris, France, and various other roles in the German government, including Director General for Economics at the German Foreign Office from 2001 to 2007 and Head of Policy Planning from 1996 to 1999. Prior to his service in these roles, Dr. Ammon served as a career diplomat in London, Senegal, and New Dehli.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing my good friend Dr. Peter Ammon for his great service and commitment to the special relationship between Germany and the United States. We thank Dr. Ammon for his leadership and send him our very best

wishes for his next post in the United Kingdom.

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST AND HONORING THE SURVIVORS

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and remember the Holocaust survivors in our community. Communities around the world this week commemorated Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. As these individuals, who were small children and teenagers during World War II, are no longer with us, it is vital that we hear and record their personal stories of what happened in the ghettos and concentration camps in Nazi-occupied Europe. We must not forget what they have to say, and we must do everything in our power to ensure that these atrocities never occur anywhere in the world.

I submit the following article from The Washington Post on first-hand accounts of those who survived.

[From the Washington Post]

WASHINGTON AREA HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS SHARE HISTORIES IN DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

(By Katherine Shaver)

Blanche Porway remembers the guard tearing her from her mother's hand as they stood in line at the Auschwitz concentration camp with hundreds of Jews and other prisoners. Her mother was led off to the gas chambers while Porway and her older sister were spared, only because the guards deemed them fit enough to work.

Porway, then 19, had already survived the ghetto in Lodz, Poland, where her father and brother had starved to death.

''My sister said, 'I can't take this,'" Porway recalled tearfully Sunday. ''But I said, 'We have to. We have to live to tell people.'"

Now 90, Porway shared her story at a brunch in Rockville to honor Holocaust survivors. The event, attended by about 40 survivors and their families, coincided with Monday's Holocaust—Remembrance Day, or Yom HaShoah, in Israel. Most of the survivors were residents at the Charles E. Smith Life Communities senior facilities in Rockville, where officials say they have one of the largest groups of Holocaust survivors in the Washington area.

They came with their adult children, who had grown up hearing their painful stories, and with grandchildren, who they hoped would learn more. They told of fathers being arrested in the night after an abrupt knock on the door. They told of their synagogues burning, of being boarded onto trains with other Jewish children fleeing the Nazis, of the nuns who hid them in convents. They showed scars on their hands from being forced to work in German factories and cried as they recalled being forced to shovel dirt at gunpoint during years in a labor camp.

Many broke into tears as they told their stories, their accents still carrying traces of their native German, French and Polish.

''It's hard to accept what happened, even now,'' Porway, who lives in Chevy Chase, said in a Polish accent, as her voice shook and her eyes teared up. A few moments later, she added quietly, ''I sometimes question if people want to hear it, or if they'll get too upset.''

Joel Appelbaum said he organized the brunch—this was the fourth—to honor Holocaust survivors in memory of his late father, who had stayed at one of the Charles E. Smith facilities. Appelbaum is vice president of the Progress Club, a Rockville social group that paid for the brunch through its charitable foundation.

He noted survivors' ages—those at the brunch were between 75 and 100—and the fact that their first-person accounts would soon be left to books and video archives.

''We have a limited window to do this,'' Appelbaum said as younger family members helped their parents and grandparents get seated, often after parking walkers and wheelchairs along the walls. ''Ten years from now,'' Appelbaum said, ''this will not be an event.''

Charles E. Smith community officials said the survivors benefit from sharing their stories, too. Some had spoken little about the Holocaust during their younger years, after they had started new lives in the United States.

''I think at this stage in their lives, they want to talk, and it helps them,'' spokeswoman Emily Tipermas said. ''They feel it's safe for them now to talk, and they understand that they lived through this period of history.''

Yetti Sinnreich said her father, Ben! Sinnreich, who is 99, had one question for her as they sat down to eat: ''Can I speak?''

Yetti Sinnreich, of Potomac, said she grew up hearing about the Holocaust from both parents, who met after the war in a ''displaced persons'' camp in Romania. Her mother, Klara Sinnreich, 97, worked as a seamstress in a labor camp.

While growing up, Yetti Sinnreich said, ''I remember my father screaming with nightmares and waking up the house.''

Klara Sinnreich no longer speaks much. But when the microphone came around, Beril Sinnreich raised his hand. He broke into tears as he recalled being forced to march to a work camp. He was 26 when Romanian soldiers came to his home, he said. He lost his entire family in the Holocaust.

''For three days and three nights, I didn't see water,'' Beril Sinnreich said. ''We slept in train wagons. Every night, frozen people were thrown out like garbage.''

They marched for six weeks, he said, and his father died of a heart attack. ''He couldn't walk anymore,'' he said.

Beril Sinnreich, stooped with age and wearing a white cap, appeared exhausted as he spoke before the crowd.

''Three years, I was in a concentration camp,'' he said through tears. ''I survived.''

When asked after the brunch what he wanted the children and teenagers in the audience to take away from his story and others, Sinnreich had a short answer: ''It shouldn't happen again.''

TIM CARPENTER: A FIGHTER FOR JUSTICE

HON. JANICE D. SCHAKOWSKY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I want to join today with so many who are remembering the life of Tim Carpenter, a life-long advocate for social, economic and environmental justice.

Tim was a believer and an activist. He believed that we could create a world where every person has the right to quality health care, to a clean environment, to a good job, and to peace. And he knew the only way to achieve that just society is to empower people to take action.

Tim's activism took many forms. As co-founder of Progressive Democrats of America, he helped design and implement an ''inside-outside'' strategy that allowed people around the country to advocate with their elected officials and gave members of Congress real insight into the daily challenges facing our constituents. He didn't just talk about problems, he pushed for solutions—expanding voting rights, winning health care for all, and investing in people.

Tim made the most of his too-short life. There wasn't a progressive fight where you couldn't find Tim—strategizing, organizing, and mentoring new recruits to the cause. Tim was tough as nails when it came to pushing for results, but he was also a gentle and kind soul who connected personally to each person he met.

Tim will be greatly missed, but he has left us a powerful legacy by teaching us never to stop pushing our progressive principles through practical and effective organizing.

I offer my deep condolences to Tim's family, friends and fellow organizers.

HONORING THE 133 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE BY THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY TO CENTRAL INDIANA

HON. SUSAN W. BROOKS

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize 133 Years of Faithful Service by the Daughters of Charity to Central Indiana.

In 1633, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul were co-founded by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac in Paris, France, to ''Serve Jesus Christ corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor.'' Over time, their work expanded worldwide with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton founding the Daughters of Charity community in the United States before the Civil War.

The Daughters of Charity in the United States were quickly recognized for their faithful ministry to people in need in the areas of health care, social services, education and spiritual care. Noting this, Bishop Francis Silas Chatard of Indianapolis worked with the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland, to begin a ministry of health care available for all people in need living in the growing city of Indianapolis.

With $34.77 in their pockets, four Daughters of Charity arrived in Indianapolis on April 26, 1881, to start a healing ministry—today known as the St. Vincent Indianapolis Hospital.

The Sisters brought with them a mission that is lived and celebrated by the St. Vincent Health ministry to this day: ''We have a mission, a reason for being here, to keep health care human; human for our patients, human for our families, human for our doctors and human for all associates. The poor will come and the rich will come, if they know they are going to be treated as people.''

Two hundred ninety-five Daughters of Charity have served in the St. Vincent ministry over the past 133 years, in whatever ways they were most needed. They have been an inspiration to St. Vincent associates, physicians,

volunteers and the broader community. As a former member of the St. Vincent Indianapolis Board of Directors who served with two Daughters of Charity, I witnessed firsthand their critical role in responding to human needs in the midst of ever-changing social, technological, human, and economic circumstances.

At the same time, the Daughters of Charity have remained responsive to contemporary health needs, as seen by the relocation and expansion of services; the establishment and operation of a nursing school; the support and expansion of training programs for physicians; the development of values-based relationships and innovative partnerships with physicians and community organizations; and the willingness to discern and redeploy resources to address greatest needs.

2014 marks a transition for the Daughters of Charity and St. Vincent Health in Indianapolis. The Daughters have deemed the ministry of St. Vincent Health to be fully prepared to continue their ministry to the Central Indiana community in the original spirit of the Daughters of Charity, and therefore are assigning their Indianapolis-based Sisters to other works of charity around the United States.

Mr. Speaker, as we mark this transition, I simply want to take this moment to recognize the extraordinary and lasting contributions made by the Daughters of Charity to the improving health and well-being—body, mind, and spirit—of the people of Central Indiana, noting particularly their dedication to serving and advocating for persons who are poor and most vulnerable.

I join with the St. Vincent Health Community in thanking the Daughters of Charity for the work that began the healing ministry of St. Vincent Health in 1881 and continues to thrive today.

RECOGNIZING EAST AURORA HIGH SCHOOL'S NJROTC MARKSMANSHIP TEAM

HON. BILL FOSTER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the NJROTC Marksmanship Team at East Aurora High School for earning a top 10 finish at the Navy National Marksmanship Meet. The NJROTC Marksmanship Team at East Aurora qualified for the Navy's National Marksmanship Meet by finishing eighth out of 600 teams from across the country in the Secretary of the Navy Postal Competition.

Participants at the Navy National Marksmanship Meet are scored on their ability to accurately shoot an air rifle from three positions: lying down, kneeling, and standing. The competitors in the Navy National Marksmanship Meet must use intense concentration and remain calm to shoot accurately.

The performance of its Marksmanship Team at the Navy's National Marksmanship Meet provides a shining example of why East Aurora High School's NJROTC program is nationally recognized as a distinguished unit and regularly receives awards and honors. As recently as 2012, the Armed and Unarmed Drill Teams finished in first place in the Challenge Division, and in 2006, the Color Guard won the overall championship while competing against 500 high schools.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the following members of the East Aurora High School NJROTC Marksmanship Team for their excellent finish at the Navy National Marksmanship Meet: Cadet Master Chief Giovanni Gutierrez, Cadet Senior Chief Austin Martinez, Cadet Second Class Petty Officer Luis Nevarez, Cadet LCDR Jesus Ortega, and Cadet Senior Chief Sylvanna Parra.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I submit the following remarks regarding my absence from a vote which occurred on April 29, 2014 due to a medical appointment. Listed below is how I would have voted if I had been present.

Roll Number 180—H. Res. 555, On Ordering the Previous Question, Providing for consideration of H.R. 4414, Expatriate Health Coverage Clarification Act of 2014—"aye."

IN RECOGNITION OF THE RETIREMENT OF MRS. FLORENCE BELLAMY FROM THE PHENIX CITY SCHOOL BOARD

HON. MIKE ROGERS

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for the House's attention today to recognize Florence Bellamy who is retiring from the Phenix City School Board after 25 years of service.

Mrs. Bellamy has served on the Phenix City School Board since 1989, including terms as vice president and president. Mrs. Bellamy has also served as the Immediate Past President of the Alabama Association of School Boards, having previously served as President, President-Elect, Vice President, and District 4 Director. She has remained active within AASB, including leading or serving on the Academy Advisory Committee, Budget and Finance Committee, and the Executive/Legislative Committee. In 2001, Florence was named an All-State School Member, the association's highest honor. She has also achieved AASB's highest recognition in training, the Master's Honor Roll. In January of 2008, Mrs. Bellamy was honored with a "lifetime Achievement" award from her local Board of Education.

In addition to her dedication to education, Mrs. Bellamy has a passion for serving her community. Since 2000, she has worked as a Supervisor with the Russell County Department of Human Resources in the area of Adult Protective Services. She and her husband, Michael, have four children and three grandchildren. Mrs. Bellamy and her husband, Judge Michael Bellamy, are also active in their church.

Mr. Speaker, we join his family and friends in celebrating Mrs. Bellamy's retirement and wish her the very best.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF DEACON CALVIN O. BUTTS II

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, April 27, 2014, the Village of Harlem, New York and the Village of East Elmhurst, Queens, New York came together to celebrate the life of Deacon Calvin Otis Butts, II, father of our beloved Reverend Dr. Calvin Otis Butts, III, Senior Pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church. The celebration took place at the First Baptist Church of East Elmhurst, where Deacon Calvin O. Butts, II served the Lord and its ministry.

The celebration included the wonderful voices of the Abyssinian Baptist Church Mass Choir and the breathtaking and gospel and sound of the First Baptist Church of East Elmhurst Ministry of Music. The Baptist were certainly in the house as preachers from all over the City of New York crowded into the sanctuary to displayed their love and support to the Butts Family. The Reverend Patrick H. Young presided over the services and the Reverend Dr. Calvin O. Butts, III eulogized his father as only a proud and loving son could do. It was one of the most touching and delightful eulogies that captured our thoughts, our minds and our hearts.

I submit the obituary that was prepared detailing the wonderful life of Deacon Calvin Otis Butts, II:

THE LIFE OF CALVIN O. BUTTS II

Calvin Otis Butts, II was born on December 5, 1922 in Fitzgerald, Georgia, to Calvin Otis Butts, Sr. and Verdie Branch.

The second of eight siblings (Melba, Calvin II, Robert, Nadine, Elestine, Jerry, Joan Blondell, and Joseph) from that union, he grew up learning to love and trust God at the Salem First Baptist Church. This solid foundation of faith would strengthen and sustain him throughout his entire life. In his youth, Calvin served as a Western Union delivery boy, at that time a position not usually given to African Americans. The messengers' motto was "Take pride in your job and in your appearance," words that clearly had an influence on him through the years.

While in Fitzgerald, Calvin met Eloise Edwards, from nearby Ocilla, Georgia. He accompanied her to her high school prom, which was the beginning of a love that would endure for over six decades.

After attending Monitor High School, Calvin moved to Corona, Queens, New York, with his older half-brothers, James and Leon. He first worked in retail sales until he enlisted in the United States Army in 1942. He served tours in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, earning three Distinguished Service Medals and achieving the rank of Staff Sergeant before his honorable discharge in 1945.

Upon his return to New York, Calvin began working as a butcher. He joined the Meat Cutter's Union, and eventually became a chef at the Black Angus restaurant, a job he held for 25 years. He then went on to work for the City Of New York as a chef at the Bruener Home for Boys in the Bronx. Calvin also took care of some unfinished business, marrying his former prom date, Eloise Edwards, on September 14, 1947—a marriage that lasted 66½ years, and produced one son, Calvin Otis Butts III.

Mr. Butts was a man of integrity who stood on the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ, and

it was apparent in every aspect of his life. He was a lifetime member of the NAACP, and as a testament to his faith and service, Mr. Butts was ordained as a Deacon at the First Baptist Church of East Elmhurst, where he was also a member of the Men's Chorus.

Deacon Butts was also a good father. He was unwavering in his support, and took pride in the accomplishments of his son. He made sure that Calvin III, got an excellent education from Morehouse College. Even as his strength began to wane, you could still hear the respect and pride in Deacon Butts' voice when he extended his hand and greeted his song with a strong and clear, ''Dr. Butts.''

Deacon Calvin Otis Butts, II transitioned from labor to reward on April 21, 2014. He is survived by his loving wife, Eloise; his son and daughter-in-law, Calvin III and Patricia Butts; sisters Nadine Nealy, Elestine (Richard) Holloway, and Joan Blondell Williams; sisters-in-law Rosalee Butts and Emma Nell Butts; grandchildren Calvin IV (Tiffany). Alexander (Dina), and Patricia Jeanne; great-grandchildren Kyla Jeanne, Alexander II, Calvin V, Arthur Andrew, Reed Harris, and Ethan Nathaniel; and a loving host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

''For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept my faith; Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.'' 2 Timothy 4:6–8

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and my esteem colleagues to join me in honoring the Life of Deacon Calvin Otis Butts II.

HONORING PEDRO HUÍZAR

HON. PETE P. GALLEGO

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the legacy of Pedro Huízar. A surveyor by trade, his family roots and history date to the 1700s when accuracy in surveying depended on personal skill—not technology. Pedro was born in 1740. As a young man, he was trained as a sculptor in Spain and then sailed to the New World to seek his fortune.

Thirty-eight years later, he married his first love, María de la Trinidad Henriques. Historical records are somewhat hazy, but we know they had at least four children: three boys and a daughter. Sadly, in an event lost to history, María died. Pedro would later remarry to María Gertrudis Martinez in 1798.

In April 1793, Pedro was appointed surveyor when the San Antonio de Valero Mission—the mission we now know as The Alamo—was secularized. He was also present when Governor Manuel Muñoz distributed lands to 23 adult Indians. He too received a small piece of land for his service. Pedro went on to survey the lands at the missions San Francisco de Espada, San Juan Capistrano, San José and San Miguel de Aguayo, and Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña.

Around 1790, Pedro was commissioned by Governor Manuel Muñoz to draw the plans for reconstruction of the San Antonio de Béxar Presidio. Shortly after, on March 4, 1791, Pedro was sent to La Bahia to report on the feasibility of irrigation for lands around Nuestra Señora de Loreto Presidio, but later concluded that the efforts would be too costly.

Through his profession as a surveyor, Pedro Huízar played an important role by surveying the various missions and the presidios of San Antonio de Béxar. His reputation for honesty and sound judgment earned the trust of his community and made others call upon him when a reliable assessment or survey was required.

After many years of service, Pedro Huízar was appointed a justicia at San José in 1794 by Governor Muñoz. Later, in 1796, he was appointed justicia at Concepción, also by Governor Muñoz. In that position, he oversaw the temporal affairs of the Native American population.

Today, Pedro is most known as the probable designer or sculptor of the window of the sacristy at San Jose Mission. No documents exist to prove he was the sculptor, but it is believed he was the artist in charge of both the rose window and the façade. There are several variations of the legend concerning Pedro's connection with the rose window. Some claim that the window was dedicated to Saint Rose of Lima, but there are no roses in the window, only figs. The Huízar family maintains that the window was dedicated to Rosa, a love lost on the journey to the New World.

Today, on this floor, I honor the life and legacy of Pedro Huízar. I also honor his descendants—many of whom even today still live in the San Antonio area and in the area of the San Antonio missions.

IN MEMORY OF PETE HALL

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on Monday, April 21, 2014, a Service of Devine Worship was conducted for in thanksgiving for the Life of Lt. Col. William C. ''Pete'' Hall at the Beaufort National Cemetery at Beaufort, South Carolina.

The following is the deserved tribute from the program of the service: Lt. Col. William C. ''Pete'' Hall, 83, U.S. Air Force, husband of Lucy Ann Preacher Hall, of Beaufort, SC, died Wednesday, April 16, 2014 in Beaufort Memorial Hospital. Graveside funeral services will be held on Monday, April 21, 2014, at 11:00 am in Beaufort National Cemetery with full military honors. Pete was born January 15, 1931, in Abbeville, SC, but grew up in Ridgeland, SC. He is the son of the late Samuel Blake Hall and Pearl Potter Hall.

After graduating from Clemson University, Pete served his country in the United States Air Force for over 21 years, and was a fighter pilot with over 3,000 hours in various aircraft, including the T-33, B-57, and F-4D. He flew many bombing missions during the Vietnam War and earned numerous decorations including the Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal, and the Air Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters.

After retiring from the Air Force, Pete served his community in several capacities, including President of the Beaufort County Chamber of Commerce, President of the Low Country Chapter of Retired Officers Association and as a member of the Beaufort County Aviation Commission, Beaufort County Tax Equalization Board, the Beaufort-Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission and the Beaufort-Jasper Water Authority. He served as vice-chairman of the Beaufort County Republican Party and represented them as a delegate at several state level conventions. Pete enjoyed attending Clemson University football games, boating, fishing, and shrimping in Beaufort's waterways, as well as spending time with his family.

Mr. Hall is survived by his wife, Lucy P. Hill (married 59 years), his two sons, Williams C. Hall Jr. and Robert B. Hall, and his five grandchildren. He will be missed by his family, as well as the many friends he has made over his years of service and living in Beaufort. In lieu of flowers the family suggests that donations be made to the Wounded Warriors Project, PO Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675. Anderson Funeral Home and Crematory is serving the family.

CONGRATULATING RIVER OAKS SQUARE ARTS CENTER IN ALEXANDRIA, LOUISIANA

HON. VANCE M. McALLISTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. MCALLISTER. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to congratulate River Oaks Square Arts Center in Alexandria, Louisiana on its 30th anniversary.

Opening in February of 1984, River Oaks Arts Center was originally the home of the Bolton Family of Alexandria and was donated solely to be used to promote the arts. It is proudly listed under the National Registry of Historic Places and after years of renovation, River Oaks opened its doors to the community featuring artwork from more than 150 artists.

Over the years, River Oaks Square Arts Center has stimulated interest and appreciation for artists around the local community by its display of work. Located in Downtown Alexandria's Cultural District, this art center continues its mission intended by the Bolton family of promoting and emphasizing the value of fine arts and crafts.

I commend River Oaks Square Arts Center and congratulate them on 30 years of success, leadership, and community contribution and ask my colleagues to join me in honoring them on this momentous occasion.

SRI CHINMOY

HON. DAVID N. CICILLINE

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 50th anniversary of Sri Chinmoy's arrival to America. As a spiritual teacher, poet, artist and composer, Sri Chinmoy used his many talents to make the world a more peaceful place to live.

Sri Chinmoy was born in the village of Shakpura, Chittagong, in Bangladesh, which was at the time called East Bengal. In 1964, Sri Chinmoy first traveled to the U.S. and later embarked on a fifty-state American lecture

tour to promote his powerful message of peace, cooperation, and respect for all. His first stop was Rhode Island's Brown University. His message of peace resonated with Rhode Islanders because he sought what so many people seek—a peaceful world for himself and others.

His quiet and selfless work has served as an important example to all those who work toward peace and harmony. A few years ago, I was proud to help dedicate a statue portraying Sri Chinmoy in Roger Williams Park to celebrate the World Harmony Run, founded by Sri Chinmoy, which seeks to strengthen international ties and promote friendship. Providence is among the many cities in America and across the world that recognize the peaceful principles taught by Sri Chinmoy. In fact, there are over 100 countries that participate in the World Harmony Run.

On the 50th anniversary of Sri Chinmoy's arrival to America, it is important that we remember his message and renew our commitment to make the world a more peaceful place. His leadership is sorely missed, but his spirit and message live on. As he so aptly described: "we are all seekers, and our goal is the same: to achieve inner peace, light, and joy, to become inseparably one with our Source, and to lead lives full of true satisfaction."

HONORING THE LIFE OF MRS. SHIRLEY BLUITT LEONARD

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize beloved wife, mother, grandmother, Mrs. Shirley Bluitt Leonard, who passed away on Sunday, April 13, surrounded by her family. Mrs. Leonard was born in Mexia, TX to John C. Bluitt and Katie Wiley Bluitt Hurd. She graduated from Dunbar High School of Mexia in 1953. In 1956, she received the B.A. degree in Business from Wiley College in Marshall, TX. She earned the Master of Education from Prairie View A&M University (formerly Prairie View A&M College) in 1964. It was at Prairie View A&M University, on the steps of Suarez Hall, that she met her husband of 50 years Joe. E. Leonard, Sr. on February 28, 1964. Joe and Shirley Leonard graduated from the Master's program at PVAMU, marching together in May, 1964. She soon became certified as an educator in the State of Texas in Supervision and as a Reading Specialist, and subsequently took graduate education courses at the University of North Texas and Colorado University in Denver.

Mrs. Leonard's lifelong passion was educating others. During the course of her professional career, she taught in the Cleburne Independent School District, Aldine I.S.D., Austin I.S.D., and served as a Reading Specialist throughout the state of Texas. In the latter role, she supervised and coordinated the Title I Reading Program for the Austin Independent School District and coordinated programs for the Texas Youth Commission, formerly known as the Texas Youth Council. Mrs. Leonard was also a small business entrepreneur who owned and operated a beauty and fashion boutique for several years.

Mrs. Leonard was the mother of Dr. Joe E. Leonard, Jr., whom I also know personally through his work serving as Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and previously as the lead staff member for the Congressional Black Caucus. Mrs. Leonard, a vivacious, spirited, and loving presence among her family, friends, and the many students she taught over the years, will be deeply missed. I extend my deepest condolences to the Leonard family during this time of grieving. Our country has benefitted immensely from Mrs. Leonard's career and her memory will continue to inspire others. Through her life she has created positive pathways for many future generations.

RECOGNIZING LT. COL. EDWARD COOK AS THE 2014 EXCEPTIONAL COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER AWARD WINNER

HON. DANIEL B. MAFFEI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. MAFFEI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Lt. Col. Edward Cook as the 2014 recipient of the Exceptional Community Volunteer Award at the United Way of Central New York Achievements in Caring Celebration at the Palace Theatre in Syracuse, New York.

Lt. Col. Edward Cook, a member of the 174th Attack Wing based in Syracuse, is the standard bearer of dedication and commitment in serving his local community. Lt. Col. Cook lead a team of volunteers to collect food and toys during Drop Off Day for the Salvation Army's biggest event of the year—Christmas Bureau. Lt. Col. Cook coordinates all the logistics with his team to deliver food and toys, first to the Salvation Army, then to the Oncenter distribution point. The process culminates with Distribution Day, where Lt. Col. Cook once again leads his team to serve over 2,700 families who are most in need in Central New York.

The level of commitment shown throughout the Christmas Bureau process is remarkable, particularly this past year's Drop Off Day, where Lt. Col. Cook and his team braved below zero temperatures outside to make sure the logistical intake of food and toys ran smoothly.

This operation would simply not happen without Lt. Col. Edward Cook and his team. Lt. Col. Cook is present at every planning meeting throughout the year, and is always one of the first to step up to the plate for any other volunteer opportunity that may arise.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I recognize Lt. Col. Edward Cook as this year's recipient of the Exceptional Community Volunteer Award. We can only hope that all of us strive to have the same selfless dedication that Lt. Col. Edward Cook exhibits not only in protecting our freedom with the 174th Attack Wing, but in and around the community that we call home.

A SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE WILD HORSE AND BURRO MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

HON. DAVID E. PRICE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 30, 2014

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, as an advocate over the years for wild horses, I rise today to join a chorus of advocates in urging the Bureau of Land Management to implement a safer and more sustainable wild horse and burro management strategy. Along with a majority of Americans, I recognize that our federally-protected wild horses and burros are national treasures to be protected and preserved for future generations.

For decades, the agency has pursued an unsustainable and highly controversial approach to wild horse management. Today, the U.S. government maintains more wild horses in captivity than remain free in the wild. At the same time, the Bureau is underutilizing proven, cost-effective and humane alternatives for wild horse management that would keep wild horses on the range and avert the need for roundups, removals, sale and slaughter. This is an untenable situation, both for America's wild horses and for American taxpayers.

A June 2013 report by the National Academy of Sciences recommended using available fertility control as a "more affordable option than continuing to remove horses to long-term holding facilities." I urge the agency to fix what is not working and to move toward these science-based recommendations. I stand ready to engage in a constructive dialogue with my colleagues and with agency officials to implement much needed changes to the current management program and to provide a more certain future for America's wild horse and burros.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate of February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, May 01, 2014 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's record.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

MAY 6

9:30 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
To hold hearings to examine Department of Defense proposals relating to military compensation.
SH–216

10 a.m.
Committee on Finance
To hold hearings to examine new routes for funding and financing highways and transit.
SD–215

10:30 a.m.
Committee on the Budget
To hold hearings to examine the President's proposed budget request for fiscal year 2015 for education.
SD–608

12 noon
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
To receive a briefing on Georgia 2008, and Ukraine 2014, focusing on if Moldova is next, and to examine Russia's intentions with regard to Transnistria and Moldova.
CVC–268

2:30 p.m.
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Federal Programs and the Federal Workforce
To hold hearings to examine a more efficient and effective government, focusing on cultivating the Federal workforce.
SD–342

3 p.m.
Committee on Foreign Relations
To hold hearings to examine the Ukraine, focusing on countering Russian intervention and supporting a democratic state.
SD–419

MAY 7

9 a.m.
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
To hold hearings to examine the 2014 Farm Bill, focusing on implementation and next steps.
SR–328A

10 a.m.
Joint Economic Committee
To hold hearings to examine the economic outlook.
SH–216

2 p.m.
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Department of Homeland Security
To hold hearings to examine investing in cybersecurity, focusing on understanding risks and building capabilities for the future.
SD–192

Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government
To hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates and oversight for fiscal year 2015 for Federal information technology investments.
SD–138

2:30 p.m.
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
To hold hearings to examine surface transportation reauthorization, focusing on progress, challenges, and next steps.
SR–253

Committee on Indian Affairs
To hold hearings to examine S. 1603, to reaffirm that certain land has been taken into trust for the benefit of the Match-E–Be-Nash-She-Wish Band of Pottawatami Indians, S. 1818, to ratify a water settlement agreement affecting the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, S. 2040, to exchange trust and fee land to resolve land disputes created by the realignment of the Blackfoot River along the boundary of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, S. 2041, to repeal the Act of May 31, 1918, and S. 2188, to amend the Act of June 18, 1934, to reaffirm the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to take land into trust for Indian tribes.
SD–628

MAY 8

3 p.m.
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight
To hold hearings to examine waste and abuse in Army sponsorship and marketing contracts.
SD–342

MAY 14

2:30 p.m.
Committee on Indian Affairs
To hold an oversight hearing to examine wildfires and forest management, focusing on how prevention is preservation.
SD–628

MAY 20

9:30 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Airland
Business meeting to markup those provisions which fall under the subcommittee's jurisdiction of the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SD–G50

11 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on SeaPower
Closed business meeting to markup those provisions which fall under the subcommittee's jurisdiction of the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SR–222

2 p.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces
Closed business meeting to markup those provisions which fall under the subcommittee's jurisdiction of the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SR–222

3:30 p.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support
Business meeting to markup those provisions which fall under the subcommittee's jurisdiction of the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SD–G50

5 p.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities
Business meeting to markup those provisions which fall under the subcommittee's jurisdiction of the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SD–G50

MAY 21

10 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Personnel
Business meeting to markup those provisions which fall under the subcommittee's jurisdiction of the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SD–G50

2:30 p.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Closed business meeting to markup the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SR–222

Committee on Indian Affairs
To hold an oversight hearing to examine Indian education, focusing on the Bureau of Indian Education.
SD–628

MAY 22

9:30 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Closed business meeting to continue to markup the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SR–222

MAY 23

9:30 a.m.
Committee on Armed Services
Closed business meeting to continue to markup the proposed National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2015.
SR–222

Daily Digest

HIGHLIGHTS

The House passed H.R. 4486, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015.

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S2527–S2569

Measures Introduced: Four bills and two resolutions were introduced, as follows: S. 2271–2274, and S. Res. 430–431. **Page S2566**

Measures Passed:

Silver Star Service Banner Day: Senate agreed to S. Res. 430, expressing support for the designation of May 1, 2014, as "Silver Star Service Banner Day". **Pages S2567, S2568**

National Month of the Military Child: Senate agreed to S. Res. 431, honoring military children during the National Month of the Military Child. **PageS S2567–68**

Measures Considered:

Minimum Wage Fairness Act: Senate continued consideration of the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 2223, to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend increased expensing limitations and the treatment of certain real property as section 179 property. **Pages S2527–28, S2535–54**

During consideration of this measure today, Senate also took the following action:

By 54 yeas to 42 nays (Vote No. 117), three-fifths of those Senators duly chosen and sworn, not having voted in the affirmative, Senate rejected the motion to close further debate on the motion to proceed to consideration of the bill. **Page S2546**

Subsequently, Senator Reid entered a motion to reconsider the vote by which cloture was not invoked. **Page S2546**

Chuang, Hazel, Moritz, Schneider, Levine, and Selfridge Nominations—Agreement: A unanimous-consent-time agreement was reached providing that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 11:15 a.m., on Thursday, May 1, 2014, Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nominations of Theodore David Chuang, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, George Jarrod Hazel, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, and Nancy L. Moritz, of Kansas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit; that if cloture is invoked on any of the nominations, all post-cloture time be expired and at 1:45 p.m., Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations of Theodore David Chuang, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, George Jarrod Hazel, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, Janice Marion Schneider, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and Suzan G. LeVine, of Washington, to be Ambassador to the Swiss Confederation, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Principality of Liechtenstein; that at 5:30 p.m., on Monday, May 5, 2014, Senate vote on confirmation of the nominations of Nancy L. Moritz, of Kansas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit, and Peter A. Selfridge, of Minnesota, to be Chief of Protocol, and to have the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service, that there be two minutes for debate prior to each vote, equally divided in the usual form, and that any roll call votes, following the first in each series, be ten minutes in length; and that no further motions be in order to the nominations. **Page S2568**

Nominations Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nominations:

By a unanimous vote of 95 yeas (Vote No. EX. 118), Sheryl H. Lipman, of Tennessee, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee. **Pages S2554, S2555**

By a unanimous vote of 95 yeas (Vote No. EX. 119), Stanley Allen Bastian, of Washington, to be

United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington. **Pages S2554, S2555–56**

By a unanimous vote of 95 yeas (Vote No. EX. 120), Manish S. Shah, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. **Pages S2554, S2556**

By a unanimous vote of 94 yeas (Vote No. EX. 121), Daniel D. Crabtree, of Kansas, to be United States District Judge for the District of Kansas. **Pages S2554, S2556–57**

By a unanimous vote of 94 yeas (Vote No. EX. 122), Cynthia Ann Bashant, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of California. **Pages S2554, S2557**

By 75 yeas to 20 nays (Vote No. EX. 123), Jon David Levy, of Maine, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maine. **Page S2554**

Robert O. Work, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense. **Pages S2554–55, S2557**

Messages from the House: **Page S2564**

Measures Referred: **Page S2564**

Enrolled Bills Presented: **Page S2564**

Executive Communications: **Pages S2564–66**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S2566–67**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions:

Additional Statements: **Pages S2561–64**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Page S2568**

Record Votes: Seven record votes were taken today. (Total—123) **Pages S2546, S2555–57**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 9:30 a.m. and adjourned at 6:46 p.m., until 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 1, 2014. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Majority Leader in today's Record on page S2568.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

APPROPRIATIONS: FOREST SERVICE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2015 for the Forest Service, after receiving testimony from Tom Tidwell, Chief, and Tony Dixon, Acting Director for Budget, both of the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture.

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Department of Defense concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of the Army, after receiving testimony from John M. McHugh, Secretary, General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff, General Frank J. Grass, Chief, National Guard Bureau, Lieutenant General Jeffrey W. Talley, 32nd Chief of the Reserve, and Major General Judd H. Lyons, Acting Director, National Guard, all of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense.

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Education, after receiving testimony from Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education.

APPROPRIATIONS: DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY AND INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service, after receiving testimony from Jacob Lew, Secretary, John A. Koskinen, Commissioner, Internal Revenue Service, and J. Russell George, Inspector General for Tax Administration, all of the Department of the Treasury.

APPROPRIATIONS: NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development concluded a hearing to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2015 for the National Nuclear Security Administration, after receiving testimony from Lieutenant General Frank G. Klotz, USAF (Ret.), Administrator, National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST AND FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine reform of the defense acquisition system in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2015 and the Future Years Defense Program, after receiving testimony from Frank Kendall III, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics; Michael J. Sullivan, Director, Acquisition and Sourcing Management, Government Accountability Office; Moshe Schwartz,

Specialist in Defense Acquisition Policy, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress; Jonathan L. Etherton, National Defense Industrial Association, McLean, Virginia; and David J. Berteau, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C.

TSA OVERSIGHT

Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation: Committee concluded an oversight hearing to examine the Transportation Security Administration, focusing on confronting America's transportation security challenges, after receiving testimony from John Pistole, Administrator, Transportation Security Administration, Department of Homeland Security.

AFGHANISTAN BEYOND 2014

Committee on Foreign Relations: Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs concluded a hearing to examine Afghanistan beyond 2014, after receiving testimony from Jarrett Blanc, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Fatema Z. Sumar, Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia Affairs, both of the Department of State; Kathleen Campbell, Acting Deputy Assistant to the Administrator and Deputy Director of the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, U.S. Agency for International Development; and General John Allen (Ret.), Brookings Institution, and Parnian Nazary, Women for Afghan Women, both of Washington, D.C.

BOSTON MARATHON BOMBINGS

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine lessons learned from the Boston marathon bombings, focusing on improving intelligence and information sharing, after receiving testimony from I. Charles McCullough III, Inspector General of the Intelligence Community, Office of the Director of National Intelligence; John Roth, Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security; Michael E. Horowitz, Inspector General, Department of Justice; and David B. Buckley, Inspector General, Central Intelligence Agency.

INDIAN TRIBAL ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-DETERMINATION ACT AMENDMENTS

Committee on Indian Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine S. 2132, to amend the Indian Tribal Energy Development and Self-Determination Act of 2005, after receiving testimony from Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs; Tracey A. LeBeau, Director, Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs, Department of Energy; Carole Lankford, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Nation, Pablo, Montana; Michael O. Finley, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Washington, D.C.; Aletha Tom, Moapa Band of Paiutes, Moapa, Nevada; and James M. Olguin, Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council, Ignacio, Colorado.

DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY OVERSIGHT

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee concluded an oversight hearing to examine the Drug Enforcement Administration, after receiving testimony from Michele M. Leonhart, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration, Department of Justice.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Committee on Rules and Administration: Committee concluded a hearing to examine how undisclosed money and post-McCutcheon campaign finance will affect the 2014 election and beyond, after receiving testimony from United States Supreme Court Associate Justice John Paul Stevens (Ret.); Neil Reiff, Sandler, Reiff, Young and Lamb, Donald McGahn, Patton Boggs LLP, Norman J. Ornstein, American Enterprise Institute, Trevor Potter, Campaign Legal Center, and Ann M. Ravel, California Fair Political Practices Commission, all of Washington, D.C.

OVERMEDICATION PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine overmedication, focusing on problems and solutions, after receiving testimony from Robert Petzel, Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, Tracy Gaudet, Director, Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation, and Peter Marshall, Director of Primary Care Pain Management, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, all of the Department of Veterans Affairs; Brigadier General Norvell V. Coots, Deputy Commanding General (Support), Army Medical Command, and Assistant Surgeon General for Force Projection, and Colonel Kevin T. Galloway, Army Pain Management Program Director, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Division, both of the Office of the Surgeon General, United States Army, Department of Defense; Josephine Briggs, Director, National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services; Janet R. Kahn, Peace Village Projects, Burlington, Vermont; and Mark J. Edlund, RTI International, Twin Falls, Idaho.

PRECIOUS METALS MARKET

Special Committee on Aging: Committee concluded a hearing to examine exploring the perils of the precious metals market, after receiving testimony from

Dama Brown, Director, Southwest Region, Federal Trade Commission; Rosemary Hollinger, Deputy Director, Division of Enforcement, Commodity Futures Trading Commission; Karl Spicer, Fairfax, Virginia; and Joe Melomo, Austin, Texas.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 18 public bills, H.R. 4521–4538; and 2 resolutions, H. Res. 560–561 were introduced. **Pages H3363–64**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H3364–65**

Reports Filed: There were no reports filed today.

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Fleischmann to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H3295**

Recess: The House recessed at 10:41 a.m. and reconvened at 12 noon. **Page H3299**

Military Construction and Veterans Affairs and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2015: The House passed H.R. 4486, making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, by a yea-and-nay vote of 416 yeas to 1 nay, Roll No. 187. **Pages H3301, H3308–58**

Agreed to:

Turner amendment (No. 4 printed in the Congressional Record of April 29, 2014) that redirects $20,000,000 in funding for Military Construction, Defense-Wide for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services; **Pages H3320–26**

Sinema amendment that increases funding, by offset, for the Office of the Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs by $1,000,000 to investigate deaths at veterans' health facilities; **Pages H3326–28**

Costa amendment that increases funding, by offset, for General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration by $10,500,000 to assist in the reduction of veterans' disability claims backlog; **Pages H3328–29**

Ruiz amendment that redirects $5,000,000 in funding for General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration for digital scanning of health and benefits files to reduce the benefits claims backlog; **Pages H3329–32**

Rothfus amendment (No. 1 printed in the Congressional Record of April 28, 2014) that prohibits funds from being used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay a performance award under section 5384 of title 5, United States Code; **Pages H3339–43**

Murphy (FL) amendment that prohibits funds from being used to maintain or improve Department of Defense real property with a zero percent utilization rate according to the Department's real property inventory database, except in the case of maintenance of an historic property or maintenance to prevent a negative environmental impact; **Page H3343**

Ross amendment that prohibits funds from being used to close a commissary store; **Pages H3343–44**

Runyan amendment that prohibits funds from being used to propose, plan for, or execute a new or additional Base Realignment and Closure round; **Pages H3349–50**

Gosar amendment that prohibits funds from being used to create or maintain any patient record-keeping system other than those currently approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs Central Office in Washington, DC; **Pages H3350–51**

Grayson amendment that prohibits funds from being used to enter into a contract with any offeror or any of its principals if that offeror has (A) within a three-year period preceding this offer, been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against it for commission of a fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes relating to the submission of offers; or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, tax evasion, violating Federal criminal tax laws, or receiving stolen property; or (B) are presently indicted for, or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with, commission of any of the offenses enumerated above in subsection (A); or (C) within a three-year period preceding this offer, has been notified of any delinquent Federal taxes in an amount that exceeds $3,000 for which the liability remains unsatisfied; **Page H3351**

Gosar amendment that increases funding, by offset, for Department of Veterans Affairs Departmental Administration, Information Technology Systems by $3,215,910; **Pages H3351–52**

Jackson Lee amendment that prohibits funds made available for benefits for homeless veterans and training and outreach programs from being used in contravention of subchapters II and III of chapter 20 of title 38, United States Code; **Pages H3352–53**

Peters amendment that prohibits funds from being used for a contract that includes first-class travel by a contractor; **Page H3354**

Nunes amendment that prohibits funds from being used for the closure or abandonment of any facility located at Lajes Field, Azores, Portugal; **Page H3354**

Walorski amendment that prohibits funds from being used to implement sole source contracting at the national level for the selection of devices and test strips for the self-monitoring of blood glucose; and **Pages H3354–55**

Noem amendment that prohibits funds from being used to prepare an environmental impact statement in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 with respect to a health care facility of the Department of Veterans Affairs that is (1) designated as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service; and (2) located in a highly rural area. **Page H3355**

Rejected:

Moran amendment (No. 5 printed in the Congressional Record of April 29, 2014) that sought to strike section 411, which prohibits funds from being used to construct, renovate, or expand any facility in the United States, its territories, or possessions to house any individual detained at United States Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, for the purposes of detention or imprisonment (by a recorded vote of 168 ayes to 249 noes, Roll No. 185) and **Pages H3337–39, H3355–56**

Blumenauer amendment that sought to prohibit funds from being used to implement Veterans Health Administration directive 2011–004 with respect to the prohibition on ''VA providers from completing forms seeking recommendations or opinions regarding a Veteran's participation in a State marijuana program'' (by a recorded vote of 195 ayes to 222 noes, Roll No. 186). **Pages H3344–49, H3356–57**

Withdrawn:

Castor (FL) amendment that was offered and subsequently withdrawn that would have increased funding, by offset, for Military Construction, Air Force by $9,800,000 to address black mold in military facilities; **Page H3320**

Terry amendment that was offered and subsequently withdrawn that would have prohibited funds from being used for administrative expenses of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs meets with the Nebraska delegation to discuss alternative options for the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital planned for construction in Omaha, Nebraska; and **Pages H3332–34**

LaMalfa amendment that was offered and subsequently withdrawn that would have allowed a caseworker in a congressional office to contact a Department of Veterans Affairs brokered office to receive an update on a constituent's case, and that brokered office of the Department is required to update the congressional staffer. **Pages H3334–37**

Point of Order sustained against:

Takano amendment (No. 3 printed in the Congressional Record of April 29, 2014) that sought to prohibit funds from being used for the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program or the Post 9/11 Educational Assistance Program for career education programs at proprietary institutions unless the successful completion of the curriculum fully qualifies a student (1) to take an examination required for entry into an occupation or profession, including satisfying all State-mandated programmatic and specialized accreditation requirements and (2) to be certified or licensed or to meet other academically-related pre-conditions of employment in the State in which the institution is located; **Page H3344**

Takano amendment that sought to prohibit funds from being used by the All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program or the Post 9/11 Educational Assistance Program for recruiting or marketing activities; and **Page H3350**

Farenthold amendment that sought to prohibit funds from being used to pay the salary of any officer or employee of the Federal Government with respect to whom the President of the Senate or the Speaker of the House of Representatives has certified a statement of facts to a United States attorney under section 104 of the Revised Statutes. **Pages H3353–54**

H. Res. 557, the rule providing for consideration of the bills (H.R. 4486) and (H.R. 4487), was agreed to by voice vote after the previous question was ordered by a yea-and-nay vote of 227 yeas to 189 nays, Roll No. 184. **Pages H3301–08**

Moment of Silence: The House observed a moment of silence in honor of the victims of recent tornadoes. **Page H3356**

Meeting Hour: Agreed that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow, May 1st. **Page H3362**

Quorum Calls—Votes: Two yea-and-nay votes and two recorded votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H3307–08., H3355–56, H3356–57, H3357. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Committee Meetings

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

Committee on Agriculture: Subcommittee on Livestock, Rural Development, and Credit held a hearing entitled "To review the State of the Livestock Industry". Testimony was heard from Joseph Glauber, Chief Economist, Department of Agriculture; and public witnesses.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies held a markup on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill FY 2015. The bill was ordered reported to the Full Committee without amendment.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Intelligence, Emerging Threats and Capabilities held a markup on H.R. 4435, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015". The bill was forwarded to the Full Committee without amendment.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Strategic Forces held a markup on H.R. 4435, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015". The bill was forwarded to the Full Committee without amendment.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces held a markup on H.R. 4435, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015". The bill was forwarded, as amended, to the Full Committee.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Military Personnel held a markup on H.R. 4435, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015". The bill was forwarded to the Full Committee without amendment.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE WAR ON POVERTY: LESSONS FROM THE FRONTLINES

Committee on The Budget: Full Committee held a hearing entitled "A Progress Report on the War on Poverty: Lessons from the Frontlines". Testimony was heard from public witnesses.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Energy and Commerce: Full Committee concluded a markup on H.R. 2689, the "Energy Savings Through Public-Private Partnerships Act"; H.R. 4092, the "Streamlining Energy Efficiency for Schools Act of 2014"; and H.R. 6, the "Domestic Property and Global Freedom Act". The following bills were ordered reported, as amended: H.R. 2689; H.R. 4092; and H.R. 6.

EXAMINING HOW TECHNOLOGY CAN PROMOTE CONSUMER FINANCIAL LITERACY

Committee on Financial Services: Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit held a hearing entitled "Examining How Technology Can Promote Consumer Financial Literacy". Testimony was heard from Alice Puente Cackley, Director, Financial Services and General Government Markets and Community Investment, Government Accountability Office.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Full Committee held a markup on the following legislation: H.R. 4490, the "United States International Communications Reform Act of 2014"; H.R. 4028, to amend the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to include the desecration of cemeteries among the many forms of violations of the right to religious freedom; H. Res. 520, calling for an end to attacks on Syrian civilians and expanded humanitarian access; and H. Con. Res. 51, Immediate Establishment of Syrian War Crimes Tribunal Resolution. The following bills and resolutions were ordered reported, as amended: H.R. 4490; H.R. 4028; H. Res. 520; and H. Con. Res. 51.

ASSESSING U.S. FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PRIORITIES IN SOUTH ASIA

Committee on Foreign Affairs: Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific held a hearing entitled "Assessing U.S. Foreign Assistance Priorities in South Asia". Testimony was heard from Nisha Biswal, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Department of State; and Denis Rollins, Acting Assistant Secretary, Bureau for Asia, U.S. Agency for International Development.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Homeland Security: Full Committee held a markup on the following legislation: H.R. 3283, the "Integrated Public Alert and Warning System Modernization Act of 2013"; H.R. 4007, the "Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards Program Authorization and Accountability Act of

2014''; and H.R. 4228, the ''DHS Acquisition Accountability and Efficiency Act''. The following bills were ordered reported, as amended: H.R. 3283; H.R. 4007; and H.R. 4228.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURE

Committee on The Judiciary: Full Committee held a markup on the following legislation: H.R. 3530, the ''Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2013''; H.R. 3610, the ''Stop Exploitation Through Trafficking Act of 2013''; H.R. 4225, the ''Stop Advertising Victims of Exploitation Act of 2014''; H.R. 776, the ''Security in Bonding Act of 2013''; and, H.R. 306, for the relief of Corina de Chalup Turcinovic. The following bills were ordered reported as amended: H.R. 776; H.R. 4225; H.R. 3610; and H.R. 3530. The bill H.R. 306 was ordered reported without amendment.

MISCELLANEOUS MEASURES

Committee on Natural Resources: Full Committee held a markup on the following legislation: H.R. 4315, the ''21st Century Endangered Species Transparency Act''; H.R. 4316, the ''Endangered Species Recovery Transparency Act''; H.R. 4317, the ''State, Tribal, and Local Species Transparency and Recovery Act''; and H.R. 4318, the ''Endangered Species Litigation Reasonableness Act''. The following bills were ordered reported, as amended: H.R. 4315; and H.R. 4316. The following bills were ordered reported, without amendment: H.R. 4317; and H.R. 4318.

EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS EXPORTS ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform: Subcommittee on Energy Policy, Health Care and Entitlements held a hearing entitled ''Examining the Effect of Liquefied Natural Gas Exports on U.S. Foreign Policy''. Testimony was heard from Christopher Smith, Principal Deputy, Assistant Secretary, Office of Fossil Energy, Department of Energy; and Amos Hochstein, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Energy Diplomacy, Bureau of Energy Resources, Department of State.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION BUDGET REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology: Subcommittee on Environment, hearing entitled ''An Overview of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015''. Testimony was heard from Kathryn Sullivan, Undersecretary, Oceans and Atmosphere, Department of Commerce, and Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

SBA-CREATED INITIATIVES: NECESSARY OR REDUNDANT SPENDING

Committee on Small Business: Full Committee held a hearing entitled ''SBA-created Initiatives: Necessary or Redundant Spending?''. Testimony was heard from Rhett Jeppson, Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development, Small Business Administration; Tameka Montgomery, Associate Administrator, Office of Entrepreneurial Development, United States Small Business Administration; Javier Saade, Associate Administrator, Office of Investment and Innovation, Small Business Administration.

AIR SERVICE TO SMALL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure: Subcommittee on Aviation held a hearing entitled ''Air Service to Small and Rural Communities''. Testimony was heard from Susan Kurland, Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs, Department of Transportation; Gerald L. Dillingham, Director, Civil Aviation Issues, Government Accountability Office; and public witnesses.

IDEAS TO IMPROVE MEDICARE OVERSIGHT TO REDUCE WASTE, FRAUD AND ABUSE

Committee on Ways and Means: Subcommittee on Health held a hearing entitled ''Ideas to Improve Medicare Oversight to Reduce Waste, Fraud and Abuse''. Testimony was heard from Gloria L. Jarmon, Deputy Inspector General, Audit Services, Office of the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services; Kathleen King, Director of Health, Government Accountability Office; and Shantanu Agrawal, M.D., Deputy Administrator and Director, Center for Program Integrity, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Health and Human Services.

Joint Meetings

CUTTING RED TAPE

Joint Economic Committee: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the first step to cutting red tape, focusing on a better analysis, after receiving testimony from Jay Timmons, National Association of Manufacturers, Washington, D.C.; John D. Graham, Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Bloomington; Michael Greenstone, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge; and Shaye R. Mandle, LifeScience Alley, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2014

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry: Subcommittee on Jobs, Rural Economic Growth and Energy Innovation, to hold hearings to examine the importance of regional strategies in rural economic development, 10 a.m., SR–328A.

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine proposed budget estimates for fiscal year 2015 for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, 9:30 a.m., SD–192.

Committee on Armed Services: to receive a closed briefing on the Ukrainian crisis and Russia, 2 p.m., SVC–217.

Committee on the Budget: to hold hearings to examine exploring social impact bonds, focusing on investing in what works, 10 a.m., SD–608.

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources: to hold hearings to examine shortages on gas, focusing on a look into propane shortages this winter, 2:30 p.m., SD–366.

Committee on Finance: to hold hearings to examine the President's 2014 Trade Policy Agenda, 11:40 a.m., SD–215.

Committee on the Judiciary: business meeting to consider S. 1720, to promote transparency in patent ownership and make other improvements to the patent system, and the nominations of Carlos Eduardo Mendoza, and Paul G. Byron, both to be a United States District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, Darrin P. Gayles, and Beth Bloom, both to be a United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, Deirdre M. Daly, to be United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, and James Walter Frazer Green, to be United States Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, both of the Department of Justice, and Elisebeth Collins Cook, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, 10 a.m., SD–226.

Select Committee on Intelligence: to hold closed hearings to examine certain intelligence matters, 2:30 p.m., SH–219.

House

Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, markup on H.R. 4435, the ''National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015'', 9:30 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Readiness, markup on H.R. 4435, the ''National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2015'', 10:30 a.m., 2212 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, hearing entitled ''Telehealth to Digital Medicine: How 21st Century Technology Can Benefit Patients'', 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, Subcommittee on Capital Markets and Government Sponsored Enterprises, hearing entitled ''Legislative Proposals to Enhance Capital Formation for Small and Emerging Growth Companies, Part II'', 9:30 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, hearing entitled ''The Central African Republic: from ''Pre-genocide'' to Genocide?'', 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Benghazi, Instability and a New Government: Success and Failures of U.S. Intervention in Libya'', 9:30 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Ongoing Intelligence Activities'', 9 a.m., 304–HVC. This is a closed hearing.

Next Meeting of the **SENATE**

9:30 a.m., Thursday, May 1

Senate Chamber

Program for Thursday: After the transaction of any morning business (not to extend beyond 11:15 a.m.), Senate will vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the nominations of Theodore David Chuang, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, George Jarrod Hazel, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, and Nancy L. Moritz, of Kansas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Tenth Circuit.

At 1:45 p.m., Senate will vote on confirmation of the nominations of Theodore David Chuang, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, George Jarrod Hazel, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland, Janice Marion Schneider, of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and Suzan G. LeVine, of Washington, to be Ambassador to the Swiss Confederation, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador to the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Next Meeting of the **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

9 a.m., Thursday, May 1

House Chamber

Program for Thursday: Consideration of H.R. 4487—Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2015 (Subject to a Rule).

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