

AMENDING TITLE 49 WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN GRANT ASSURANCES

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5944) to amend title 49, United States Code, with respect to certain grant assurances, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5944

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

SECTION 1. GRANT ASSURANCES.

Section 47107 of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(t) RENEWAL OF CERTAIN LEASES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding subsection (a)(13), an airport owner or operator who renews a covered lease shall not be treated as violating a written assurance requirement under this section as a result of such renewal.

“(2) COVERED LEASE DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ‘covered lease’ means a lease—

“(A) originally entered into before the date of enactment of this subsection;

“(B) under which a nominal lease rate is provided;

“(C) under which the lessee is a Federal or State government entity; and

“(D) that supports the operation of military aircraft by the Air Force or Air National Guard—

“(i) at the airport; or

“(ii) remotely from the airport.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CARSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ZELDIN. 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 H.R. 5944.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5944. This bill will ensure regulatory consistency and stability for airports that are co-located with Air National Guard or Air Force bases.

In recent years, several Air National Guard units have had their manned aircraft mission replaced with an unmanned aircraft mission. For some of these units, the unmanned aircraft are remotely operated from the Guard facilities but not located at the airport.

Since, in some instances, the unmanned aircraft do not land at the airport from where they are being operated, there is concern that the nominal leases these units have long enjoyed may no longer be permitted by the Federal Aviation Administration.

This bill ensures that an airport's simple renewal of a nominal rate lease

with an Air National Guard unit that operates aircraft, remotely or otherwise, does not result in the airport losing its Federal grant funding.

The bill in no way prohibits airports from negotiating new lease terms with Air National Guard units, but it ensures that should an airport and an Air National Guard unit agree to renew a nominal rate lease they may do so.

Mr. Speaker, in this time of transition for military aviation, this bill allows airports and the Department of Defense sufficient flexibility to rebalance and adjust the missions of Air National Guard units without jeopardizing the airports' FAA grants.

This bill provides that flexibility while preserving the right of airports to renew leases that it believes are in the best interest of the airport and surrounding community.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5944.

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

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I support this bill as well, which will allow our Nation's military to continue leasing space at airports at nominal rates.

Current law requires that airports agree to certain conditions to receive Federal airport grants. One of these requirements is for an airport to generate revenue that sustains most, if not all, of the airport's operations. If airports continue to renew leases under which tenants of airport property pay discounted rates, they could violate their grant assurances and put their Federal airport funding in jeopardy.

This bill allows airports to continue offering below-market rates to military tenants. I have no objection to this bill. However, I would like to note that our Nation's airport infrastructure needs far exceed the Federal funding available. I regret that we are not here discussing some accompanying language that would increase airports' ability to generate revenue, such as through the passenger facility charge or an increase in funding for the Airport Improvement Program.

I am very pleased this bill is narrowly tailored to accommodate the important missions of the National Guard and the U.S. Air Force, as well as to protect the needs of airports.

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

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER).

Mr. CRAMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues from New York and Indiana and the other colleagues supporting this legislation. They have described it beautifully.

I would just simply state that what this really does is it brings FAA policy up to the contemporary standards of modern-day missions by our Air Force and Air National Guard.

Many flying missions have made the transition or are making the transition

from manned aircraft to remotely piloted aircraft, just like the Happy Hoopligans in my home State of North Dakota, and I think this policy recognizes that reality.

I am just going to wrap up by simply stating, Mr. Speaker, that there are many benefits to this bill in addition to the ones that have been stated. First of all, it is taxpayer friendly, and it is mission appropriate. It does nothing to diminish but rather enhances the integrity of the Air Force's mission, and it is good for taxpayers. It supports airport authorities and their flexibility, as well as military and defense operations.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it strengthens the defense of our country, which is our highest priority, by keeping military installations at local airports.

I urge a “yes” vote on H.R. 5944.

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

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Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support H.R. 5944.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for their swift consideration of H.R. 5944. This important, bipartisan piece of legislation helps our National Guard and Air Force continue to evolve into the 21st Century as Remote Piloted Aircraft—or RPA's—become a modern tool in our efforts to defend our nation.

RPA's provide key intelligence, reconnaissance, close air combat support, and have become one of the most reliable tools in our toolbox as we fight terrorism abroad. Years ago, we could not have envisioned the advances in technology that now allow our soldiers and pilots to fly missions from a control center thousands of miles from the battlefield. Yet our laws are unfortunately woefully outdated when it comes to the infrastructure that supports RPA's. Now is the time to update those laws and now is the time to update this critical infrastructure.

This bill allows our National Guard and Air Force stations on civilian airfields that operate and participate in RPA missions to remain eligible for nominal leases. Doing so will save our military millions of dollars that can be spent elsewhere—on soldiers and equipment.

Without this fix to federal law, estimates show that the National Guard would be forced to spend over \$155 million each year just to keep their leases for bases they are on now. That would be an additional \$155 million on top of the current costs. If faced with this enormous cost, bases would be forced to shutter their operations permanently and missions would be eliminated entirely.

This legislation not only saves dollars, it saves our current defense structure that helps protect our country, which in turn saves lives.

Nothing in this legislation creates a mandate for our airports or the military, rather it allows leases and current agreements to be renewed. Future agreements can be fairly negotiated without the risk of airfields losing FAA grant eligibility or the Guard losing their entire budget to lease payments.

I have many constituents that work at the Battle Creek Air National Guard Based in Michigan, which is just one of the many dual-use airfields that will immediately benefit from

our legislation. Those servicemen and women support missions from cyberspace, on the ground, and in the air with our MQ-9 RPA mission that contribute to combat terror efforts overseas as we speak.

We cannot risk disturbing these critical missions by moving or eliminating the capability the Guard and Air Force provide simply because of outdated laws that could not have foreseen the technology we would be using to effectively carry out missions. Every Guard and Air Force base on a civilian airfield will have the certainty to continue their operations without the fear of losing the lease structure currently in operation. With our bill, airfields will have the certainty knowing they are still eligible for FAA grants and together, the Guard and the FAA can develop better agreements for the future of airfields across the nation.

H.R. 5944 prevents a disruption of our missions, saves taxpayer dollars, and allows our Guard to modernize for the 21st century and beyond.

I would like to sincerely thank the House Transportation and Infrastructure, Chairman SHUSTER and Subcommittee Chairman LOBIONDO, both majority and minority staff, Nick Bush on my staff, as well as the Federal Aviation Administration for working together on this bipartisan solution for our airfields across the country.

Providing for the national defense and supporting our troops around the country is one of Congress' foremost priorities and H.R. 5944 ensures that our military will continue to be the greatest in the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5944.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION VETERAN TRANSITION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2016

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5957) to include disabled veteran leave in the personnel management system of the Federal Aviation Administration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5957

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Federal Aviation Administration Veteran Transition Improvement Act of 2016".

SEC. 2. INCLUSION OF DISABLED VETERAN LEAVE IN FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 40122(g)(2) of title 49, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (H), by striking “; and” and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in subparagraph (I)(iii), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(J) subject to paragraph (4) of this subsection, section 6329, relating to disabled veteran leave.”.

(b) CERTIFICATION OF LEAVE.—Section 40122(g) of such title is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (4) as paragraph (5); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following:

“(4) CERTIFICATION OF DISABLED VETERAN LEAVE.—In order to verify that leave credited to an employee pursuant to paragraph (2)(J) is used for treating a service-connected disability, that employee shall, notwithstanding section 6329(c) of title 5, submit to the Assistant Administrator for Human Resource Management of the Federal Aviation Administration certification, in such form and manner as the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration may prescribe, that the employee used that leave for purposes of being furnished treatment for that disability by a health care provider.”.

(c) APPLICATION.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to any employee of the Federal Aviation Administration hired on or after the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.—Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration shall prescribe policies and procedures to carry out the amendments made by this section that are comparable, to the maximum extent practicable, to the regulations prescribed by the Office of Personnel Management under section 6329 of title 5, United States Code.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CARSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ZELDIN. 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 H.R. 5957.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5957.

When Congress passed the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act last year, it inadvertently excluded new FAA employees from coverage under a new sick leave system. This bill corrects that omission.

Mr. Speaker, one-third of veterans who served after September 11 report having a service-connected disability, with more than two-thirds of those disabilities rating 30 percent or higher.

There are more than 35,000 veterans in my district alone, many of whom have the skill sets and background in aviation necessary to succeed in highly technical FAA positions. This bill will help ensure that a veteran's service to our Nation does not become a barrier to future employment.

I want to thank Aviation Subcommittee Chairman LOBIONDO and Subcommittee Ranking Member LAR-

SEN for their leadership and bipartisan partnership on this simple, yet important fix to remove an unnecessary barrier to employment for our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 5957.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5957, the Federal Aviation Administration Veteran Transition Improvement Act of 2016.

This bill, introduced by my colleague and Aviation Subcommittee Ranking Member RICK LARSEN, a distinguished Member, will provide newly hired disabled veterans at the FAA with the same entitlement to leave that disabled veterans receive at other Federal agencies. I am also proud to be a sponsor of this bill.

H.R. 5957 will close an important loophole and it will create parity between FAA-employed veterans with certain service-connected disabilities and veterans at other Federal agencies.

This bill is fair, it is necessary, and it is the right thing to do for servicemen and -women who have bravely served this great Nation.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the very distinguished gentleman from Washington State (Mr. LARSEN).

Mr. LARSEN of Washington. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in support of H.R. 5957, the FAA Veteran Transition Improvement Act of 2016.

Last November, after passing the House and the Senate by unanimous consent, the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act was signed into law. That legislation recognizes that no one who has sustained an injury due to military service should have to choose between earning a paycheck or receiving health care.

Specifically, that act provides up to 104 hours of upfront, disabled veteran leave during an employee's first 12 months on the job. The Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act will apply to anyone hired on or after November 5 of this year.

However, that legislation only applies to Federal civilian personnel covered under title 5 leave provisions. Consequently, those not covered under title 5—including employees of the FAA—are not able to use these leave benefits.

Now, in my own State of Washington, there are more than 650 veterans who work at the FAA; and across the country, more than 15,000 veterans work for the FAA. From 2012 to 2016, the FAA hired between 150 to 350 veterans each year—men and women who have served our country but may be unable to get the health care that they need. So in an effort to expand these benefits to disabled veterans hired by the FAA, Representative LOBIONDO joined me in introducing this bipartisan bill earlier this month.