

- (1) the date of enactment of this Act; or
 (2) December 19, 1999.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN).

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

Mr. Speaker, the Senate bill was introduced by the late Senator from Rhode Island, Senator John Chafee. It restores the report under the Endangered Species Act.

The Endangered Species Act requires all Federal agencies to use their authorities for the protection and conservation of those species listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act. In 1988, section 18 of the ESA was added to require the Secretary of the Interior to send to Congress a report on the amount of taxpayer funds spent by each Federal agency in carrying out the mandates of the ESA.

Since 1990, the Committee on Resources has been receiving these reports which detail Federal spending on endangered and threatened species. The last report indicates that over \$300 million has been directly spent by over 20 Federal agencies to protect endangered and threatened species. The reports tell us the amount spent on each listed species so we know where those Federal resources are going and can determine whether this spending is achieving the desired results of recovery of listed species.

Section 3003 of the Federal Reports Elimination and Sunset Act of 1997 terminated a long list of reports to Congress contained in the report of the Clerk of the House. The Clerk's report lists statutorily required reports to Congress from various Executive Branch agencies. Unfortunately, in the zeal to eliminate unnecessary reporting by Federal agencies, this very important and useful report was inadvertently eliminated as well.

S. 1744 simply retains the existing requirement of the Secretary of the Interior to provide Congress with this important information currently required by the Endangered Species Act. It does not affect any other provision of the ESA and does not address any substantive concerns regarding the ESA. I urge Members to support S. 1744 and send this important legislation to the President for his signature.

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may use.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation. As explained by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN), this was an inadvertent mistake when this report was terminated by the Fed-

eral Reports Elimination Sunset Act of 1995, and it is right for us to reinstate it.

It is obvious to all Members of Congress that the Endangered Species Act has been one of our Nation's keystone environmental laws to protect biodiversity and recover threatened and endangered species from the brink of extinction. This better helps us target our efforts to restoring endangered species.

Section 18 of the Endangered Species Act requires the Secretary of the Interior to report annually to the Congress on "reasonably identified" expenditures for the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered species under the ESA. This report includes an accounting of expenditures from all Federal agencies and from all States that receive section 6 grant funding for conservation activities. Over the years this report has been a valuable tool to discern priorities and trends in how and where ESA funds are spent.

Unfortunately, the section 18 report was included in the list of unnecessary report requirements when Congress passed the Federal Reports Elimination and Sunset Act of 1995. Consequently, this report requirement was scheduled to sunset on December 21, 1999, provided that Congress does not act to reauthorize it.

This bill would correct the initial oversight and simply reauthorize this valuable report requirement. It is my understanding that the Administration did not include this report in the initial list that was forwarded to the Clerk of the House in 1994, and it is my further understanding that the Administration does not oppose its reinstatement at this time.

The Endangered Species Act has been our Nation's keystone environmental law to protect biodiversity and to recover threatened and endangered species from the brink of extinction. This bill would restore a helpful report and do no harm to the Act itself. I support S. 1744 and urge all members to do likewise.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 1744.

The question was taken.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 2932 and S. 1744.

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

There was no objection.

HMONG VETERANS' NATURALIZATION ACT OF 2000

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 371) to expedite the naturalization of aliens who served with special guerilla units in Laos, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 371

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 "Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000".

SEC. 2. EXEMPTION FROM ENGLISH LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT FOR CERTAIN ALIENS WHO SERVED WITH SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNITS OR IRREGULAR FORCES IN LAOS.

The requirement of paragraph (1) of section 312(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1423(a)(1)) shall not apply to the naturalization of any person—

(1) who—

(A) was admitted into the United States as a refugee from Laos pursuant to section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1157); and

(B) served with a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, operating from a base in Laos in support of the United States military at any time during the period beginning February 28, 1961, and ending September 18, 1978; or

(2) who—

(A) satisfies the requirement of paragraph (1)(A); and

(B) was the spouse of a person described in paragraph (1) on the day on which such described person applied for admission into the United States as a refugee.

SEC. 3. SPECIAL CONSIDERATION CONCERNING CIVICS REQUIREMENT FOR CERTAIN ALIENS WHO SERVED WITH SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNITS OR IRREGULAR FORCES IN LAOS.

The Attorney General shall provide for special consideration, as determined by the Attorney General, concerning the requirement of paragraph (2) of section 312(a) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1423(a)(2)) with respect to the naturalization of any person described in paragraph (1) or (2) of section 2 of this Act.

SEC. 4. DOCUMENTATION OF QUALIFYING SERVICE.

A person seeking an exemption under section 2 or special consideration under section 3 shall submit to the Attorney General documentation of their, or their spouse's, service with a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, described in section 2(1)(B), in the form of—

(1) original documents;

(2) an affidavit of the serving person's superior officer;

(3) two affidavits from other individuals who also were serving with such a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, and who personally knew of the person's service; or

(4) other appropriate proof.

SEC. 5. DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXEMPTION AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.

In determining a person's eligibility for an exemption under section 2 or special consideration under section 3, the Attorney General—

(1) shall review the refugee processing documentation for the person, or, in an appropriate case, for the person and the person's spouse, to verify that the requirements of section 2 relating to refugee applications and admissions have been satisfied;

(2) shall consider the documentation submitted by the person under section 4;

(3) shall request an advisory opinion from the Secretary of Defense regarding the person's, or their spouse's, service in a special guerrilla unit, or irregular forces, described in section 2(1)(B) and shall take into account that opinion; and

(4) may consider any certification prepared by the organization known as "Lao Veterans of America, Inc.," or any similar organization maintaining records with respect to Hmong veterans or their families.

SEC. 6. DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION AND PAYMENT OF FEES.

This Act shall apply to a person only if the person's application for naturalization is filed, as provided in section 334 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1445), with appropriate fees not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 7. LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the total number of aliens who may be granted an exemption under section 2 or special consideration under section 3, or both, may not exceed 45,000.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 371, the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Today, Mr. Speaker, this body considers legislation to facilitate citizenship opportunities for Hmong refugees who were recruited by the United States to assist our combat effort in Indochina. Twenty-five years after the end of the Vietnam War, we honor the heroism and sacrifices of the Hmong.

At great personal peril and loss of life, they fought with us and performed critical roles in dangerous missions on our behalf.

As a former CIA officer pointed out in a statement submitted to the Committee on the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims in the last Congress, and I quote, "Throughout the war, CIA's paramilitary forces collected intelligence, used it in combat operations to tie down some 50,000 North Vietnamese forces in Laos, rescued downed American pilots and protected sensitive American installations at remote mountain tops."

Those Hmong veterans who survive the war face severe persecution for their association with us.

H.R. 371 acknowledges that many Hmong veterans face unique language problems that present insurmountable obstacles to U.S. citizenship. The Hmong we recruited during the Vietnam War, including some at a very early age, lived at a predominantly preliterate society.

Lieutenant Colonel Wangyee Vang, National President, Lao Veterans of America, explained in his statement for the 1997 hearing of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, "Cultural barriers and the fact that a written Hmong language was not used in much of Laos until late in its history have compounded the problems of literacy for the Hmong."

In recognition of their compelling and extraordinary sacrifices, H.R. 371 provides for an exemption from the English language requirement and authorizes special consideration related to the civics requirement.

The gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO), our esteemed colleague, is the author of this legislation, and he may have put it best when he testified as follows before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims in the last Congress: "They probably have passed the most important test, Mr. Chairman, and that is risking their lives for the values and beliefs that we revere as Americans and saving American lives."

The step we hopefully will take today is overdue. In the 104th Congress, this body passed an omnibus immigration reform bill in a form that included provisions designed to expedite naturalization for those who served with special guerrilla units in Laos, but these provisions were not incorporated in the final version of the legislation.

In the 105th Congress, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO) introduced as H.R. 371 language virtually identical to the original House-passed provisions from the previous Congress.

In June 1997, the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims held a hearing on H.R. 371. The following year, the subcommittee favorably reported an amended version of the bill to the full Committee on the Judiciary. As amended, H.R. 371 addressed concerns about the potential for fraud by delineating steps to be taken in determining eligibility and limiting to 45,000 the number of potential beneficiaries.

Although the full Committee on the Judiciary in June 1998 ordered the bill as amended in subcommittee favorably reported, no further action was taken in the 105th Congress. In the 106th Congress, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO) reintroduced his bill under the same number, incorporating changes the Committee on the Judiciary supported in 1998. In March of this year, the full Committee on the Judiciary acted again favorably, this time ordering H.R. 371 reported by voice vote.

As this history documents, the details of this legislation have been considered thoroughly by the Committee on the Judiciary, and we bring it up on the floor today with improvements my committee approved in both the last Congress and the current Congress. In our most recent markup, I displayed a Pandau "story cloth" depicting the escape of Hmong refugees across the Mekong River to a camp in Thailand after their villages were strafed by Communist forces in Laos. Such story cloths were a way of communicating Hmong history by people who knew no written language.

This bill will permit a limited number of lawful permanent residents of the United States who served with special guerilla units or irregular forces in support of the U.S. military during the Vietnam war to become citizens. They must have been legally admitted to this country as refugees from Laos, and provision is also made for certain spouses who came as refugees.

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It is particularly significant that the bill before us focuses on people who are already here in the United States legally and permanently. In view of their commitment to our democracy and the great hardships they endured when they made common cause with us, we act appropriately by extending a hand to them now and helping them become citizens of their adopted land. This is just and humane legislation Members can endorse regardless of political affiliation.

Governor Ventura of Minnesota appealed to me on behalf of these freedom fighters in February, and I welcomed the opportunity to assure him and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. VENTO) that I would do whatever I could to help get H.R. 371 enacted into law. Supporters of this important bill include the American Legion and the Special Forces Association. I urge my colleagues to support enactment of H.R. 371.

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

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume; and I, of course, rise in strong support of this measure, the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act.

First and foremost I would like to thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), the distinguished chairman, for his leadership and continuing support throughout the committee process. I would also like to, of course, acknowledge the strong support I have had from my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH), who for some time has encouraged and helped me refine this legislation; and of course the ranking member on the committee, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS).

I would especially like to thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr.

WATT) for his work in the past years, as well as the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), the current ranking member on the subcommittee with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH).

Furthermore, of course, the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service have extended themselves and provided assistance and counsel in working out the final language in the bill. As we know in this body, good intentions are not enough. We need to have precise language with regards to Immigration and Naturalization Service issues because misunderstandings do arise.

Today is a historic day and, of course, this past month we have been talking about the 25-year anniversary of the fall of Saigon and the last of the American troops leaving Vietnam. Events have been relived these past weeks, harsh memories of Vietnam that are unpleasant to all Americans. While the Vietnam War is over for all America, the plight of our friends within this region and Laos must be remembered.

The Lao-Hmong soldiers, as young as 10 years old, were recruited and fought and died alongside 58,000 U.S. soldiers, sailors, and airmen in Vietnam. As a result of their contributions, bravery and loyalty to the United States, the Lao-Hmong were tragically overrun by the Communist forces and lost their homeland and status in Laos after the Vietnam War. Between 10,000 and 20,000 Lao-Hmong were killed in combat-related incidents, and over 100,000 had to flee to refugee camps and other nations to survive.

Mr. Speaker, this is a point where we can be very proud that the United States did not abandon these camps and these people, but we responded and opened our doors for refugee assistance and permitted them to come into the United States. Today, in Minnesota, because of the growing population in the Midwest, we have nearly 60,000 Lao-Hmong that now know Minnesota as their new home.

Many of the older Lao-Hmong patriots who made it to the U.S. are separated from their family members and have had great difficulty in adjusting to many aspects of life and culture in the United States, including passing aspects of our required citizenship tests. Learning to read in English has been the greatest obstacle for the Lao-Hmong because written characters in the Hmong language have only been introduced in recent years.

As the chairman of the committee pointed out, the Pandau did the illustrations because they did not have a written language. Very often the only way they could record their history was through their wonderful artwork. If my colleagues would like to see some more of this, Mr. Speaker, they can come to St. Paul, and even in my office. I have a large hanging about the

size of a bedspread of this type of depicted character which reflects this wonderful needle work and craft work and history really of the Lao-Hmong and their Chinese origin.

This act, of course, has been explained by the chairman. It facilitates the assistance with regards to citizenship. It extends this benefit. There are tight limits on the bill. I would note that the chairman of the committee has gone beyond and above the call of duty. He had to arm wrestle Governor Jesse Ventura; and fortunately, they declared a draw and he decided to move ahead with the legislation.

This legislation is supported by a whole host of veterans organizations. It is good legislation. It is targeted legislation. It is limited. And it does respond, I think, to the Lao-Hmong problem.

I would say to my colleagues that while the English language and citizenship tests are important, that the Lao-Hmong have indeed passed a more important test. They put their lives on the line to save American sailors and soldiers. They put their lives on the line for the values that are reflected in the promise of America and in this Nation. And so I am proud to stand here today to represent them and to ask my colleagues for their support in supporting this bill.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. VENTO. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to thank this gentleman for this legislation and for sticking with it all this time on behalf of the Lao-Hmong.

As the gentleman knows, California has many Lao-Hmong residents in our State and also in my district, and they have been fantastic constituents and residents of our State and of our country. I want to thank the gentleman so very much for finally getting this bill to the floor again so that we can deal with this problem that he has so adequately addressed.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman; and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN), the distinguished chairman of the Committee on International Relations.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I am pleased to rise in strong support of H.R. 371, the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act of 2000.

It is long overdue, Mr. Speaker, that we gave special recognition to the Hmong, who courageously fought with our personnel in Vietnam. They were working in the underground activities in Laos. I had the opportunity of visiting General Vang Pao headquarters back in 1973, and he showed me all the

bullet holes around his headquarters where they had been attacked time and time again. They served valiantly and courageously. Then, after the war was over, we left them out to dry, to hang; and we have not done anything to assist them over these years.

I want to commend our distinguished chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), for expediting the naturalization of aliens who served with special guerrilla units in Laos, guerrilla units that did an outstanding job on behalf of our Nation. We can do no less for so many who did so much for all of us.

Mr. VENTO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to mention that there are 108 sponsors of this, including colleagues like the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND), who has a significant population. The entire Minnesota delegation is in support of this, as are numerous Members from this area.

The gentleman from Guam (Mr. UNDERWOOD) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SMITH) wanted to speak on this, and I know they are going to put their statements in the RECORD.

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

Mr. HYDE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume to say that, in addition to being very honored to help pass this excellent bill and the regret it took so many years to get to this point, one of the ancillary benefits of the campaign for this bill was a visit by the governor of Minnesota, Mr. Ventura. He and I did engage in some arm wrestling. And I want to say that the fact that he let me win has nothing to do with my support for this excellent bill.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 371, the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act.

H.R. 371, is a necessary step in assisting the Hmong, a special group of legal immigrants who served with the U.S. Armed Forces and now require help in obtaining U.S. citizenship. It waives the residency requirement for those Hmong and their spouses. Additionally, it waives the English language test and residency requirement for attainment of U.S. citizenship. It would only affect individuals who reside legally in this country and would not grant veteran's status or make the Hmong people who served in the Special Guerrilla Forces eligible for veterans' benefits.

This important legislation would impact thousands of people in the United States, including the large Lao-Hmong community in my home district of western Wisconsin. The history of Hmong demonstrates the need for this legislation. The Hmong are not considered veterans by our government even though they participated in covert operations directed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Many served in non-uniformed units, therefore making it uncertain if "veteran" status can be proved. The Hmong aided our efforts during the Southeastern Asian conflict at a high personal cost.

Between 10,000 and 20,000 Hmong lost their lives. The Hmong population lost their homeland to Communist forces. After the war, more than 100,000 Hmong were forced to either flee or live in refugee camps. Many Hmong were separated from their families.

The process of assimilation to the United States has been especially challenging for the Hmong. A major problem for many Hmong is an insufficient command of the English language which prevents them from completing the naturalization process. This is partly due to the fact that the Hmong did not have a written language until the 1950s. Therefore, learning to speak, read, and write the English language has been extremely difficult. The English-learning process has also been stymied by the high rate of illiteracy among the Hmong in this recently acquired written language. The majority of the Hmong who were brought to the United States as political refugees had very little opportunity for education during their war-ravaged years in Laos.

Mr. Speaker, the Hmong people need our help. It is wrong to abandon these men and women who served as valuable allies to us during the Southeastern Asian conflict and that is why I support H.R. 371.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 371, the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 2000. I commend my colleague, Mr. BRUCE VENTO, for his leadership and sponsorship with this important measure.

The Hmong veterans have more than proven themselves worthy of American citizenship. It is the obligation of the United States government to pass this bill, which will create an exemption of the English language requirement for naturalization purposes.

As many of us are aware, from 1961–73 during the Vietnam War, the Central Intelligence Agency recruited tens of thousands of Hmong and Laotians to serve in special guerrilla forces fighting the North Vietnamese and the Communist government in Laos. These soldiers fought valiantly alongside American troops. Through their efforts, they were able to defend intelligence sites, prevent thousands of U.S. troops from an ambush by North Vietnamese troops, and rescue hundreds of downed American pilots. Between 10,000–20,000 Hmong and Laotian soldiers lost their lives in service to the U.S. government.

Unfortunately, when the war ended, Hmong and Laotians were forced to flee their country in an effort to avoid persecution by their governments. The sacrifices they had to make were immense—they gave up their homes, their livelihood and their country. Over 150,000 of them have resettled in the U.S. as political refugees.

Since then, many Hmong and Laotian veterans have faced great difficulty in attaining naturalization status. In fact, today, approximately 60.4 percent of the Hmong and 66.1 percent of the Laotians are still legal permanent residents.

The barriers Hmong and Laotian veterans face involve the significant level of illiteracy and predominant lack of formal education in their community. It was only forty short years ago that Hmong became a written language; thus, many in their community have never learned to read, or to write. This fact leads to

the incredible difficulty, and sometimes, impossibility, for the Hmong veterans to learn the English language enough to pass the citizenship test.

Mr. Speaker, during the Vietnam war, the U.S. government promised the Hmong and Laotian soldiers that they would find a refuge in the United States if we lost the war. In fact, the CIA promised to evacuate the Hmong, only to leave them behind in 1974.

It is important for us now to fulfill that promise, and to recognize and honor the contributions the Hmong and Laotian veterans have made, as well as the lives that were lost, to the United States war efforts. The best way for us to do those things is to grant an exemption for these individuals from the English language requirement for naturalization. This exemption, like our fulfillment of the promise, is long overdue.

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker I stand with my colleagues in support of H.R. 371, the Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act.

By approving this bill, we will make an important contribution to the efforts of the thousands of Hmong veterans and their families to become United States citizens. For over two decades, Hmong veterans have encountered serious obstacles that have impeded their ability to become U.S. citizens. This bill addresses this by exempting Hmong veterans from English language proficiency and residency requirements.

Many Americans are only beginning to appreciate and recognize the invaluable service and bravery of Hmong veterans. Today, we have an opportunity to assure that their service to freedom and to the United States will not be forgotten.

Hmong veterans fought in the Vietnam War alongside American forces at great personal peril and loss of life. They performed critical roles in dangerous missions, collected vital intelligence, rescued downed American pilots and defended sensitive American installations at remote locations.

Tragically, at the end of the war and as a result of their service and bravery, tens of thousands of Hmong freedom fighters and their families constantly faced the horrible reality of life in prison camps and the threat of genocide.

Many Hmong veterans and their families sought refuge in the United States. California's Central Valley, which I represent, has been a primary relocation site for them. I am proud that the Central Valley is one of the most ethnically diverse parts of the country and that the Hmong community has contributed greatly to that diversity and enriched us with their traditions.

In light of their service, heroism and dedication to freedom, it is only fitting that America embrace those Hmong veterans that fought with distinction and honor. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this bill.

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, today I rise as a cosponsor of H.R. 371, the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act of 1999, to honor the Hmong people, many of whom risked their lives or died in service to the United States during the Vietnam War.

There are over 16,000 Hmong in my home-state of Wisconsin, and the legislation before the House of Representatives today will help

many Hmong patriots who made it to the U.S. and are currently separated from their families.

This bill will allow more Hmong people to become United States Citizens by providing interpreter-assistance during the citizenship test. Unlike other languages, written characters were only introduced in the Hmong language in recent years, so learning to read in a foreign language presents an extremely difficult challenge. By providing interpreters, the family reunification process in the Hmong community can begin sooner.

Providing this service is a very small token of our appreciation for a people that so loyally fought on behalf of the United States, some of whom started fighting at the age of 10. The Hmong "mountain men" not only rescued downed American pilots, but fought heroically alongside U.S. soldiers in the Vietnam War.

It is my hope that by passing this bill today, the United States Congress will show its gratitude to the Hmong people, in appreciation of the many sacrifices they have made for this country.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this is an important bill because the Hmong have stood by the U.S. at a crucial time in our history and now is the time to repay and honor the loyalty of Hmong veterans. The Hmong were a pre-literate society. I would like to congratulate Congressman BRUCE VENTO for his leadership on this issue.

The Hmong had no written language in use when the United States recruited them during the Vietnam War. The best symbol of why H.R. 371 is necessary is the Hmong "story cloth," the Pandau cloth, that is their embroidered cloth record of important historical events and oral traditions.

The Hmong were recruited, largely, as boy soldiers. Many of the veterans of the U.S. secret Army were recruited at age 12, 13 and 14 years of age. The CIA in coordination with "Air America" built hundreds of airstrips and bases for the Hmong and their American advisors to conduct military operations.

The Hmong were critical to the American war strategy in S.E. Asia—especially the U.S. air strategy. Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides for the expedited naturalization of Hmong veterans of the U.S. Secret Army currently residing in the United States (as legal aliens) who served with U.S. clandestine and special forces during the Vietnam War by allowing them to take the citizenship test with a translator since the Hmong are a tribal people with no written language, thus relying solely on the "story cloths".

The bill is capped at 45,000, in terms of the total number of Hmong veterans, their widows and orphans who currently reside in the United States who would fall under the legislation. This cap is supported by the Hmong veterans in the United States and is considered to be a generous cap. I support this legislation to provide relief to the Hmong heroes.

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Hmong Veterans' Naturalization Act because I feel that we should reward these brave individuals who assisted American efforts in the war against communism in Southeast Asia. The Hmong which we seek to honor today were a Laotian-based guerrilla group who fought valiantly alongside American and South Vietnamese troops in Vietnam.

Many Hmong risked and lost their lives in defense of democracy at a crucial time in the history of that region. With Communism spreading across the Asian continent during the 60's, it was crucial for American troops to receive indigenous help in defense of South Vietnam. They were brave soldiers of freedom at time of great uncertainty, and their efforts have gone largely ignored for far too long.

Today, the Hmong are valuable citizens and employees in many communities across the United States, including the 10th district of North Carolina which I have the privilege to serve. In fact, I employ several Hmong in my company in Hickory, NC. They are truly great citizens who offer a strong work ethic and another facet of cultural diversity to my community, and to communities across this nation.

The Laotian Hmong have been the victims of persecution and genocide at the hands of the Communist government in Laos, largely due to the help they provided America during the Vietnam War. Now it is time for us to reward them for their sacrifice and service. Please vote yes today on H.R. 371; let us reward these brave people by expediting the naturalization of Hmong aliens who served with these special guerrilla units in Laos during the Vietnam War.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 371, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to facilitate the naturalization of aliens who served with special guerrilla units or irregular forces in Laos."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MEMORIAL TO HONOR DISABLED VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1509) to authorize the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation to establish a memorial in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1509

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

SECTION 1. MEMORIAL TO HONOR DISABLED VETERANS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES.

(a) MEMORIAL AUTHORIZED.—The Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation is authorized to establish a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia or its environs to honor veterans who became disabled while serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

(b) COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS FOR COMMEMORATIVE WORKS.—The establishment of the memorial shall be in accordance with the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1001 et seq.).

(c) PAYMENT OF EXPENSES.—The Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation shall be solely responsible for acceptance of contributions for, and payment of the expenses of, the establishment of the memorial. No Federal funds may be used to pay any expense of the establishment of the memorial.

(d) DEPOSIT OF EXCESS FUNDS.—If, upon payment of all expenses of the establishment of the memorial (including the maintenance and preservation amount required under section 8(b) of the Commemorative Works Act (40 U.S.C. 1008(b))), or upon expiration of the authority for the memorial under section 10(b) of such Act (40 U.S.C. 1010(b)), there remains a balance of funds received for the establishment of the memorial, the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation shall transmit the amount of the balance to the Secretary of the Treasury for deposit in the account provided for in section 8(b)(1) of such Act (40 U.S.C. 1008(b)(1)).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN).

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

I would first like to thank my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), for his efforts in introducing this bill. He has worked diligently in preparing this legislation. I urge Members' consideration and support of H.R. 1509.

A significant portion of veterans who served in defense of our Nation are disabled. In fact, there are nearly 2.3 million disabled veterans in America today who have fought in foreign conflicts ranging from the Gulf War to World War I. There are even 13 disabled veterans from the Mexican border war against Pancho Villa. Although we honor these men and women on Memorial Day, there is no memorial to commemorate those veterans who were disabled during our Nation's conflicts. H.R. 1509 serves to recognize our disabled veterans by authorizing the Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation to construct a memorial honoring their sacrifice on behalf of our country.

The Disabled Veterans' LIFE Memorial Foundation will be responsible for all expenses associated with the establishment of this memorial. This bill ensures that its establishment will be in compliance with the Commemorative Works Act and that Federal funds will not be used to pay for the memorial.

Mr. Speaker, I again commend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) for his tireless work on behalf of America's veterans, and H.R. 1509 reflects his years of service. The gentleman from Texas is a true war hero, and I urge Members to support this bill.

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

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may use.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this legislation as described by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. HANSEN).

The minority side of the committee is in strong support of this legislation and in support of taking this important first step in the process. We look forward to a time hopefully when visitors to the Washington area can see a tangible reminder of the courage and the dedication displayed by many of our disabled veterans.

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

Mr. HANSEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON), the author of this legislation.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I appreciate the gentleman's help in getting this through the committee. I appreciate the help from the Democrat side as well.

I want to ask my colleagues to support this legislation which I introduced. It is to establish a memorial honoring our Nation's disabled veterans. The memorial expresses our thanks and, at the same time, honors the nearly 2.3 million disabled American veterans in our country today.

This memorial would pay tribute to the men and women who have fought in every major conflict this Nation has entered since the great Civil War, including 471,000 wounded in the Civil War; 234,000 wounded in World War I; 670,000 wounded in World War II; 100,000 wounded in Korea; 300,000 wounded in Vietnam; and nearly 500 wounded in the Persian Gulf War.

Despite those staggering numbers, they do not even begin to represent those who returned with no visible physical wounds but who suffered more through emotional agonies wrought by war.

There are monuments, memorials dedicated to the wars our Nation has fought and to those who lost their lives in the effort to preserve the freedom that we all enjoy. But we have not properly acknowledged the sacrifices of those who went and fought those same battles to preserve the same freedoms and who paid a severe price.

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We have yet to honor those who returned from battle with the scars and wounds which serve as daily reminders of how just costly a war can be and how precious the privileges that we enjoy in this Nation are.

This memorial would be the only one dedicated to disabled American veterans, many of whom are still living,