The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the gentleman from New York? There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 4635, and that I may be permitted to include tables, charts, and other extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York? There was no objection.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 525 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 4635.

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that all Members will pay attention closely to provisions of this section of the bill that would prohibit the return to the reading of the bill on page 9, line 8.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York? There was no objection.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there objection to amendments to this section of the bill?

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN) will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Chairman, and I would like to inquire if this is the appropriate time in the bill to offer that amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. As the Committee proceeds further on page 10 the gentleman will be in order in the reading, but at the moment another Member of the House, a member of the committee, is seeking recognition to strike the last word.

After that the Clerk will read to the proper point in the bill.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

I am pleased, Mr. Chairman, to see that a number of Members have recognized that the VA medical research account is underfunded in this bill, and that we want to increase this funding through amendments that we are going to consider soon. The chairman and the ranking member have done a good job under tough constraints on this legislation, but this is one item that we really need to tend to here today. I am glad to see that we will have the opportunity to do so.

I have been a strong proponent of VA medical research, and I offered an amendment during the full Committee on Appropriations markup that would have increased that account by $23 million. I want to take just a minute today to explain why I support increasing the VA medical research account and why it is so important for us to find a way of doing so.

The original request from the VA to OMB was to fund the account at $397 million. Outside supporters of the program believe the program should be funded at $386 million. These recommendations are both well above the current bill's level of $321 million.

Most of us have heard about the Seattle foot, that remarkable artificial limb that has been depicted in television commercials by a double amputee playing pick-up basketball or by a woman running a 100-yard dash. It is not obvious that she has two artificial legs until the camera zooms in at the end of the commercial. The technology for this prosthesis was developed by VA researchers in Seattle.

Research at VA hospitals is important because it is clinical research, mainly. The researcher, who is almost always affiliated with a neighboring teaching hospital, also treats patients, veterans. The VA research program is the only one dedicated solely to finding cures to ailments that affect our veteran population. It is not interchangeable with other research efforts.

At the Durham, North Carolina, VA, which is affiliated with Duke University, there is a great range of research being done, from working to find a cure for AIDS to finding a shingles vaccine. Important advances in brain imaging and telemedicine. This work, of course, assists veterans, but it also helps the population at large.

The VA does a great job of leveraging its funds. Dr. Jack Feussner, the director of the VA medical research program, testified that for every dollar of increase that the program has received over the last 5 years, it has received $3 from other sources. Therefore, if we were to add $23 million here today, it could translate into $92 million more for research.

What will these additional funds be used for? Eleven million dollars is needed just to maintain current services, to keep up with medical inflation. Another $12 million could be used for any number of research projects.

The VA is starting a research oversight program vital to the integrity of the human-based research programs. It could be a model for other federally-assisted research. This program needs $1 million.

To bring the program back to the high water mark of 1998 would take $43 million. Dr. Feussner has listed four areas that would benefit particularly from additional research dollars: Parkinson’s disease, end-stage renal failure, diabetes, and Post-Traumatic Shock Disorder. Additional research into the treatment and cure for hepatic cirrhosis would also be looked at carefully.

We also need to increase the commitment to training the next generation of clinician and nonclinician investigators. To keep that program on track would take an additional $10 million.

Now, Mr. Chairman, difficult decisions will need to be made on these upcoming amendments, and there are several of them. They all offer an offset of some sort. Most of the offsets I would not support if they stood alone. But the overall allocation for our VA-HUD subcommittee is just not sufficient, and these difficult trade-offs must be made.

I am hopeful that, at the end of this process, an additional allocation will be available and that we will be able to fund VA medical research at close to $386 million and that any offsets that we adopt can largely be restored. However, it is very important to raise the appropriations level here today for medical research before this bill goes any farther in the appropriations process.

I hope this is helpful, this overview of how these monies might be spent and why we need them. Additional funding for VA research will benefit our veterans and our country, and I hope Members will pay attention closely to the arguments on the amendments to follow.

The CHAIRMAN. Are there further amendments to this section of the bill?