The "sole-survivor" policy of the Armed Forces was designed with the best of intentions but has yielded some unfortunate, unintended consequences. Currently, there are no standard benefits available to those who separate from the Armed Forces under this policy, whether or not their service obligation is completed.

This legislation puts the House firmly on record that sole survivors should qualify for a standard set of Federal benefits that are generally available to other veterans, including education benefits, transitional healthcare, and the ability to keep any enlistment bonus paid to them. Given the exigencies of the situation, the retroactive action being taken here today to protect sole survivors who have been honorably discharged from the military since September 11, 2001 is the right thing to do.

Let me take a moment to comment on the bill's other provision, Section 9 of today's legislation, which would repeal the dollar limitations on contributions to funeral trusts. This revenue provision, authored by the gentleman from Wisconsin, Mr. KIND, has been included to offset the additional spending associated with the bill's sole survivor provisions.

As my colleagues know, I have complained often during the 110th Congress that the Committee on Ways and Means has been used repeatedly as a piggy-bank by other panels looking to offset the cost of new spending proposals. I certainly would have preferred to have the sole survivor provisions in today's legislation funded by suitable spending reductions identified by the committees of jurisdiction, rather than by a revenue enhancement.

But that option, having been fully explored, was not available to us on this bill. Under the circumstances, the path chosen today by the Majority is an appropriate one for several reasons.

First, given the urgency of acting on this legislation, we do not have time to wait. We understand that some of these sole survivors have had recent paychecks withheld or have recently received bills from the military demanding repayment of their enlistment bonuses. Families like the Hubbards are facing pressing financial deadlines, and we do not have the luxury of waiting to address this issue on their behalf.

Second, unlike numerous other examples from the 110th Congress, the higher revenues derived from this funeral trust provision are not being used to substantially expand eligibility for an entitlement program to classes of people for whom it was not originally intended, or to provide existing enrollees new benefits not already in law. Instead, this bill uses the small amount of revenue raised to correct a narrow, but serious, flaw in current law. That is an important difference.

Third, I would note that this provision is fully voluntary—it would only affect those Americans who voluntarily opt to make larger contributions to a pre-paid funeral trust.

Finally, unlike prior revenue raisers proposed by the Majority that would impose unwelcome tax increases on unsuspecting Americans, this particular revenue offset is actually strongly supported by those who would pay the additional tax. In other cases where the Majority has sought higher revenues to pay for new spending, our friends across the aisle have typically targeted either politically disfavored taxpayers, such as smokers or "the rich," or groups, such as late-filing taxpayers, who would almost certainly be unaware of the tax increase until they had to write a bigger check to Uncle Sam. By contrast, the tax provision here is the rare bird in Washington: a proposed revenue enhancement that has generated no discernible opposition and that has actually been endorsed by the leading industry group representing affected taxpayers,The National Funeral Directors Association.

As I noted, I generally would prefer that we not use the tax code to raise revenue to pay for higher spending. But this legislation presents unique facts and circumstances that justify the action being taken today, and I hope my colleagues in the other body will act quickly to get this important bill to the President's desk.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6580.

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.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFEREES ON H.R. 4137, COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY AND AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees on H.R. 4137:

From the Committee on Education and Labor, for consideration of the House bill and the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Messrs. GEORGE MILLER of California, HINOJOSA, TIERNEY, WU, BISHOP of New York, ALTMIRE, YARMUTH, COURTNEY, ANDREWS, SCOTT of Virginia, Mrs. DAVIS of California, Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, Ms. HIRONO, Messrs. KELLER of Florida, PETRI, Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Ms. FOXX, Messrs. KUHL of New York, WALBERG, CASTLE, SOUDER, EHLERS, Mrs. BIGGERT, and Mr. MCKEON.

From the Committee on the Judiciary, for consideration of secs. 951 and 952 of the House bill, and secs. 951 and 952 of the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. CONYERS, Ms. WATERS, and Mr. GOHMERT.

From the Committee on Science and Technology, for consideration of secs. 961 and 962 of the House bill, and sec. 804 of the Senate amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Messrs. GORDON of Tennessee, BAIRD, and NEUGEBAUER.

There was no objection.

LEAD-SAFE HOUSING FOR KIDS ACT OF 2008

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 6309) to amend the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 to define environmental intervention blood lead level and establish additional requirements for certain lead hazard screens, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 6309

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 "Lead-Safe Housing for Kids Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO RESIDENTIAL LEAD-BASED PAINT HAZARD REDUCTION ACT OF 1992.

(a) AMENDMENTS.—Section 1017 of the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 4852c) is amended—

(1) by striking "Not later than" and inserting "(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than"; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(b) ENVIRONMENTAL INTERVENTION BLOOD LEAD LEVEL.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this title and any regulations issued under this title, an environmental intervention blood lead level shall be defined as the lower of—

"(A) 10 μg/dL (micrograms of lead per deciliter); or

"(B) the elevated blood lead level of concern for a child under six years of age that has been recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"(2) RELATION TO OTHER AUTHORITIES.—This Act may not be construed as affecting the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency under section 403 of the Toxic Substances Control Act.".

(b) REGULATIONS.—Not later than the expiration of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall amend the regulations of such Department to comply with the amendments made by subsection (a).

SEC. 3. REPORT TO CONGRESS ON PREVIOUS LEAD HAZARD INSPECTION PROGRAMS.

Not later than the expiration of the 90-day period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development shall submit a report to the Congress on the status of the program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development known as the Big Buy program and any other voluntary programs the Secretary has implemented, or has planned to implement, through which the Secretary has conducted, or planned to conduct, lead evaluations of housing covered by section 35.715 of the Secretary's regulations (24 C.F.R. 35.715; Lead Safe Housing Rule for pre-1978 assisted housing). Such report shall include the following information:

(1) A description of the purpose of such programs implemented or planned to be implemented.

(2) A statement of the amounts allocated for each of such programs.

(3) Identification of the sources of the funding for each of such programs.

(4) A statement of the amount expended to each of such programs, as of the date of the submission of the report.

(5) A statement of the number of properties and the number of dwelling units intended to be covered by each of such programs.

(6) A statement of the number of properties and the number of dwelling units actually assisted by each of such programs.

(7) A description of the status of each of such programs, as of the date of the submission of the report.

(8) An explanation as to why each of such programs have not been completed.

(9) A description of any enforcement actions taken against owners of such housing who were to have been held harmless with respect to any noncompliance with section 1018 of the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992 (42 U.S.C. 4852d), or with any rules implementing such section, during implementation of such programs.

(10) A timeline for completion of the remaining properties and units covered by each of such programs.

SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act and the amendments made by this Act such sums as may be appropriated for fiscal year 2009.

(b) COSTS OF COMPLIANCE.—This Act and the amendments made by this Act shall not create any obligation or requirement on the part of any owner of housing, public housing agency, or other party (other than the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development) to comply with any new obligations established by or pursuant to this Act or such amendments, except to the extent that the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development makes amounts available to such owner, agency, or party for the costs of such compliance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) and the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and to insert extraneous material thereon.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise to strongly urge my colleagues to support H.R. 6309, the Lead-Safe Housing Act of 2008.

Let me start by thanking Chairman FRANK, Subcommittee Chair WATERS, and Housing Subcommittee Ranking Member SHELLEY CAPITO, for all of their work on this legislation to protect low-income children in public housing from lead exposure. I also want to thank the Energy and Commerce Committee and Chairman DINGELL for their work on this bill as well.

H.R. 6309 requires that the Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, update its blood lead level intervention regulations to reflect the level used by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The legislation simply requires HUD to update its blood lead regulations from the current 20 micrograms per deciliter to 10 micrograms per deciliter. The Center for Disease Control, the CDC, has that as their recommended threshold. Or if the CDC updates their standard to a lower number, that lower number.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is long overdue. The CDC, in 1991, 17 years ago, determined that a blood lead level of 10 micrograms per deciliter was the threshold for potential damage in children. Lead poisoning causes destructive physical, intellectual and behavior problems, including weight loss, decrease in IQ, hyperactivity, lethargy, and even sometimes, Madam Speaker, death. In fact, a 4-year-old young man swallowed a lead charm and died in my district a couple years ago.

Lead poisoning is one of the largest environmental hazards affecting children in America today, and it is also one of the most preventable hazards. Madam Speaker, our most vulnerable children often face a greater risk of being exposed to lead. Children of color, children from low-income families are more likely to reside in older homes, and these homes are much more likely to contain lead paint.

Thanks to congressional action in the 1990s, our country has seen significant progress in reduction of children exposed to lead. Between 1991 and 1994, 4.4 percent of children under six, or more than 800,000 children, had unacceptably high levels of lead in their blood of 10 micrograms per deciliter or higher.

□ 2030

The CDC now estimates that this number has dropped to 1.6 percent of children or more than 300,000 children. That's progress, but progress is not enough. Though this is progress, 300,000 children are still 300,000 too many; 1 is too many.

Madam Speaker, my legislation is just one attempt to tackle the problem. I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress to some day eradicate this problem of elevated blood lead levels in children. This legislation is supported by numerous organizations from the Children's Defense Fund to the Sierra Club.

Madam Speaker, let me just note that challenging and reducing childhood lead exposure will help our society lower the number of children who have reduce IQ because of this exposure, reduced hyperactivity, reduce children experiencing impulse control, and all of these things have implications for our juvenile court system and our adult court system, not to mention shutting off, closing down the tremendous potential that is locked up in every child.

Madam Speaker, with that I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise in support of H.R. 6309, the Lead-Safe Housing for Kids Act of 2008, designed to address the serious health hazards that high levels of lead have on children in their home environment.

In 1992 the Congress passed the landmark residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act to address what was at the time an epidemic of childhood lead poisoning. In conjunction with Federal efforts to limit the use of leaded gasoline and lead in food and juice cans and in drinking water pipes, this law has been remarkably effective in reducing the incidence of childhood lead poisoning. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report, Healthy People 2010, the decline in childhood lead poisoning in the United States represents a major public health success.

The Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act directed HUD to establish regulations for the evaluation of lead hazards. In its regulation, referred to as the Lead-Safe Housing Rule, HUD established an environmental intervention blood level of 20 micrograms per deciliter for a single test or 15 to 19 micrograms per deciliter for two tests taken at least 3 months apart.

H.R. 6309 will require HUD to issue new regulations that adopt the level of 10 micrograms per deciliter. Eliminating lead exposure greater than 10 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood among children by the year 2010 is one of the national health objectives established by the Department of Health and Human Resources.

Mr. ELLISON is to be commended for his commitment to strengthen the definition of a child's elevated blood lead level, and I recommend my colleagues support this legislation.

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

Mr. ELLISON. Let me also thank the gentleman from California. Madam Speaker, it's wonderful when we can come together on both sides of the aisle to protect our children. In fact, one of the most important things we can do is to protect community and children, and so I am honored to be able to share the floor with the gentleman tonight.

With that, Madam Speaker, let me just thank all of the community groups that came forward, including Sierra Club, Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota, and many others who have come to make this moment possible.

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I want to extend my appreciation to the gentleman from Massachusetts, Chairman FRANK, for his cooperation in working out issues related to the bill's definition of "elevated intervention blood lead level". I also commend him for his help in maintaining the relationship between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in carrying out the Residential Lead-Based Paint Hazard Reduction Act of 1992, as well as preserving the respective roles of the health-based agencies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in making recommendations regarding the environmental intervention blood lead level, and the EPA in establishing that level under section 403 of the Toxic Substances Control Act.

I have strong concerns, however, about a provision that was not in the original bill and was added during the Financial Services committee process. This provision would only provide the benefits of the new protective blood lead level recommended by the CDC in the bill to children, including children in public housing

agencies, in those instances in which the Federal Government pays for the cost of compliance. I doubt whether the Federal resources budgeted or appropriated will ever be adequate to protect all children who need to be protected from exposure to lead-based paint at the recommended CDC level. All children should have the same level of health protection from lead hazards. This level of health protection should not depend on where a child lives.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6309, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

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

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

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SKELTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

A ''SMART'' NEW ERA IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, the members of the Out of Iraq Caucus, the Progressive Caucus, and many other Members of this body have demanded that the administration change course in Iraq for many years now. We have also urged the administration to build a new foreign policy based on peaceful engagement, not on war.

For years the administration ignored us. We were voices in the wilderness. But today our ideas are winning wide acceptance, and they now occupy the center of the political debate.

We called for a timetable for the responsible redeployment of our troops and military contractors out of Iraq. In recent days even the presumptive Republican nominee for President has embraced this idea. The White House has talked about a time horizon for withdrawal. The Iraqi leaders, who are eager to regain their national sovereignty, have called for a firm timetable.

Perhaps most surprising, there has been sudden movement on the diplomatic front. A high-ranking State Department official sat down with Iran's nuclear negotiator, which the administration had stubbornly refused to do for over 6 years, and Secretary of State Rice met with her North Korean counterpart to urge North Korea to verify the dismantling of its nuclear weapons program.

We can only wonder how much could have been achieved, and how many lives could have been saved, if the administration had emphasized diplomacy all along.

These turn of events, however, didn't happen by themselves. They happened because so many of us in Congress and the American people demanded them.

Now we must demand even more change. We must demand a whole new foreign policy. America must reject saber-rattling and wars of choice and instead use the far more effective tools of diplomacy and international cooperation to achieve our national security goals. I hope that our next President will turn the page on the failed policies of the past and choose a new course.

I have offered a blueprint for change that can help us chart this course. It's a plan called SMART, which stands for Sensible, Multilateral American Response to Terrorism. I offer it again today because I believe that the American people are ready to support its principles.

SMART was developed with the help of Physicians For Social Responsibility, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, and Women's Action For New Directions.

SMART would end our isolation in the world and build strong international coalitions to fight terrorism and solve common challenges such as trade, the environment, and global health. It would strengthen our intelligence capabilities aimed at tracking and stopping terrorism. It would focus on stopping the spread of weapons of mass destruction with vigorous inspection regimes, regional security arrangements, and a renewed commitment to nonproliferation. It would renew our commitment to the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, a program which has been successful in securing loose nuclear material. It would address the root causes of terrorism through an ambitious international development program, a program that includes initiatives for better education and health, initiatives which are the building blocks of stability and peace and the best way to deny new recruits to the terrorists. And it would reshuffle our budget to include a serious effort to develop alternative energy and end the addiction of foreign oil that threatens our security.

Madam Speaker, this is a time of profound change. The country is preparing for a new administration. Momentum is building for ending the occupation of Iraq sooner rather than later. We must begin now to answer the question, What happens after Iraq?

I hope that my colleagues will consider SMART a good way to start answering that question. It would send a clear signal that America is once again ready to respect the rule of law and human rights and work for peace in the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

RETIREMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN CRUMP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the members of the National Bar Association being in the Eighty-third meeting of this Association in the City of Houston, County of Harris, State of Texas to affirm and declare the position of said Association in Resolution as follows:

In May of the Year 1978, John Crump, being an attorney licensed by the Supreme Court of the State of Texas, acting in direction of the then President of the National Bar, Mark T. McDonald, of MacDonald and McDonald in Houston, Harris County Texas, did remove himself from said city to assume the interim position of the Executive Director of the National Bar Association in the District of Columbia for the period of three months through the