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CBO TRANSPARENCY ACT

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

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Remember back in school when your math teacher expected you to show your work when solving a problem? It made sense. A number on a page, even if it was the correct answer, didn't suffice because your teacher wanted you to demonstrate you knew how to solve the problem. There, the outcome was a grade on a quiz or a test. But what about when we're talking about hundreds of billions or trillions of dollars? Why is it we take on blind faith the cost estimates produced by one of the most influential accounting firms in the United States, the Congressional Budget Office.

In 1974, the Congressional Budget Office, or CBO, was formed to give Congress independent, nonpartisan, objective analysis of legislation. In addition, the CBO is required by law to produce a cost estimate—or "score"—for every bill coming out of committee of either Chamber of Congress. It sounds good in theory, but the problem is no one knows how CBO arrives at their numbers—and they won't tell us. They don't have to. CBO is not required to "show their work," like we were required in school, when announcing economic impact results.

Members of Congress rely on the CBO score. A favorable or a budget-neutral score makes a difference for a bill's success or failure. If there are savings, chances are better that the bill will get a vote on the floor. If it's budget-neutral, it may still get a vote. But what happens if the analysis was wrong and turns out to lead to big deficits, or what if Congress failed to call up a bill for a vote because CBO scored it as deficit spending when really it could lead to substantial savings?

The price of an inaccurate estimate right now is extremely high. Our national debt is closing in on \$16 trillion. Major safety net programs like Medicare and Medicaid are heading for bankruptcy. Congress has to act to bring our country back from the brink of a fiscal cliff. It is crucial for policymakers to have all available information about the true cost of legislation. And that's why I introduced H.R. 6136, the CBO Transparency Act, so lawmakers and the public have an opportunity to review CBO's work.

Today, you can access information on hospital visits, crop yields, and air quality levels, which are used to produce major regulation by the EPA and others. But you can't find out how the CBO scored things. Like any scientific study, opening up the details of a CBO analysis for greater inspection and peer review will enable us to better understand how decisions are made.

This bill isn't about pointing out inaccuracies in CBO's estimates. What

we're doing here is using transparency to enhance the credibility of the Congressional Budget Office. Once the information is out there, it can be reviewed by Congress and all Americans. Is the information correct? Do they consider all the facts? Was something left out? Was their analysis done right?

In 2009, a University of Chicago researcher revealed a CBO office had grossly underestimated potential savings from changes to Medicare and Medicaid. For instance, CBO overestimated the cost of Medicare part D by 40 percent. In the 1980s, CBO predicted spending on hospitals stays under new law would be \$19 million more expensive than the actual cost. Congress changed Medicare to pay hospitals a fixed amount per admission. This encouraged shorter stays, led to fewer diagnostic services, and lowered administrative costs. But CBO didn't predict that, and by 1986 actual spending for hospital payments was 18 percent lower than estimated.

The CBO also estimated that if hospitals reported infection rates, it would cost about \$30 million over 5 years. It turns out when they report infection rates, they pay attention to it. And the savings has been billions of dollars over 5 years and tens of thousands of lives. When the CBO says the stimulus saved 3.3 million jobs or tax rates don't impact decisions by individuals or businesses or that cutting spending will slow economic growth, we currently have no way of understanding the conclusions CBO has reached because we can't get information on how they got there.

Ultimately, the decisions we make in Congress are only as good as the data upon which they are based. I hope all my colleagues will join me in this effort. Transparency is a cornerstone of sound government. I urge Democrats and Republicans to sign on to this bipartisan good government bill, H.R. 6136, the CBO Transparency Act.

STOP MILITARY RAPE

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

Ms. SPEIER. I rise again today to talk about military sexual trauma. It's a cancer, it's ubiquitous, it's unabated, and regrettably, unaddressed.

There was Tailhook in 1991. There was Aberdeen in 1996. There were scandals at the military academies. There were hearings, there were reports, there were toothless recommendations. So here we are, again, with yet another scandal.

At this very moment, military training instructor Luis Walker stands before a court martial for raping and assaulting recruits at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. Walker's job is to train freshly minted new Air Force recruits, many of them still in their teens. In all, there are 28 charges against him and 10 victims. Walker is a sexual predator.

On Tuesday, a victim testified that right after graduating from boot camp, Walker approached her while she sat outside on a bench waiting for a bus that would take her to technical training school. Walker came up and ordered her to get some bleach from a supply room, and then he followed her. Once inside, he closed the door and took off his training instructor's hat. "I'm not here for bleach, am I," she asked. While Walker had intercourse with her on a couch, she wondered, "My God, I hope he has a condom on."

On Wednesday, another victim testified that while on laundry detail one day, Walker showed up and told her to follow him to get some towels, but to wait 5 minutes so the surveillance cameras would not capture them going up together. Once inside a dorm, he pulled her into a flight office, kissed her, and told her to perform oral sex on him. She said she did what she was told.

Walker's defense attorneys argue that because the women never forcefully resisted, the sex was consensual. The defense also argues that because the women never came forward to report the incidents, they must not have felt victimized.

If this happens in any high school in this country—if the prized English teacher, band instructor, or football instructor had sex with his student, we would be outraged and we would demand action. That teacher would be fired. Yet at Lackland, where some of the recruits are just 18 or 19 years old, we rationalize the behavior of the perpetrator and we blame the victim. Apparently, we have a different definition of zero tolerance for sex offenders in the military world than we do for them in the civilian world. What does zero tolerance mean in the military? Is that just a catchphrase?

The 35,000 Air Force recruits who funnel through Lackland each year are mostly confined to the base for 6½ weeks of training. They get one 3-minute phone call once a week. Recruits live and breathe basic training and follow each and every order of their instructor. One rape victim at Lackland said, "Nothing a military training instructor says ends with a question mark."

Walker is not the only predator charged at Lackland. Seven additional training instructors have been charged with sexual misconduct with trainees. At least another five are under investigation. One instructor, Staff Sergeant Craig LeBlanc, bragged about his conquests to his colleague, who waited a month before he reported the incidents. Out of loyalty, the colleague stayed quiet. Once he finally reported LeBlanc's misconduct with recruits, that instructor was ostracized by fellow training instructors for being a tattletale. Is this really a culture of zero tolerance?

Congress needs to investigate and to hold an independent hearing on the widespread sex abuse at Lackland Air Force Base. In the last 3 years since