MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agreed to the following resolution:

S. RES. 160

Whereas the Senate has heard with profound sorrow and deep regret the announcement of the death of the Honorable Frank R. Lautenberg, late a Senator from the State of New Jersey: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the memorial observances of the Honorable Frank R. Lautenberg, late a Senator from the State of New Jersey be held in the Senate Chamber on Thursday, June 6, 2013, beginning at 2 p.m., and that the Senate attend the same.

Resolved, That paragraph 1 of Rule IV of the Rules for the Regulation of the Senate Wing of the United States Capitol (prohibiting the taking of pictures in the Senate Chamber) be temporarily suspended for the sole and specific purpose of permitting the Senate Photographic Studio to photograph this memorial observance.

Resolved, That the Sergeant at Arms be directed to make necessary and appropriate arrangements in connection with the memorial observances in the Senate Chamber.

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate communicate these resolutions to the House of Representatives, transmit an enrolled copy thereof to the family of the deceased, and invite the House of Representatives and the family of the deceased to attend the memorial observances in the Senate Chamber.

Resolved, That invitations be extended to the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, and the members of the Cabinet, the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States, the Diplomatic Corps (through the Secretary of State), the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Naval Operations of the Navy, the Major General Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard to attend the memorial observances in the Senate Chamber.

The message also announced that the Senate has agreed to a concurrent resolution of the following title in which the concurrence of the House's requested:

S. Con. Res. 18. Concurrent Resolution providing for the use of the catafalque situated in the Exhibition Hall of the Capitol Visitor Center in connection with memorial services to be conducted in the United States Senate Chamber for the Honorable Frank R. Lautenberg, late a Senator from the State of New Jersey.

□ 1440

PROVIDING FOR THE USE OF THE CATAFALQUE IN THE EXHIBITION HALL OF THE CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER IN CONNECTION WITH MEMORIAL SERVICES TO BE CONDUCTED IN THE UNITED STATES SENATE CHAMBER FOR THE HONORABLE FRANK R. LAUTENBERG, LATE A SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table Senate Concurrent Resolution 18, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

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

There was no objection.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

S. CON. RES. 18

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That the Architect of the Capitol is authorized and directed to transfer the catafalque which is situated in the Exhibition Hall of the Capitol Visitor Center to the Senate Chamber so that such catafalque may be used in connection with services to be conducted there for the Honorable Frank R. Lautenberg, late a Senator from the State of New Jersey.

The concurrent resolution was concurred in.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2014

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CULBERSON. 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 under consideration and include extraneous material on the consideration of H.R. 2216, and that I may include tabular material on the same.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 243 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 2216.

The Chair appoints the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1442

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2216) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes, with Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

It is my privilege, along with my good friend from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP), to present to the House for its consideration the 2014 appropriations bill for Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

One of the most important obligations this Congress has is to ensure that our men and women in uniform have everything they need to do their job without worry. We think of ourselves on this subcommittee as the peace-of-mind committee for our military so that they can focus on their missions, standing on the walls of Rome, protecting our freedom, at the far corners of the world.

I think of all the appropriations bills we consider, we're honored to bring this one to the House first because of its importance to our men and women in uniform, to their families, and to our veterans who have served our Nation. We want to be sure, as I say, that they have no worries and that they don't ever have to look over their shoulder and be concerned that the United States Congress and the American people don't support them 110 percent, as we have done in this legislation, which my colleague from Georgia and I have drafted arm-in-arm.

This is a bipartisan bill that we present to the House today to ensure that the military construction needs of the armed services are fully met. We have also done our best to ensure that when our men and women in uniform retire and move into the Veterans Affairs system, they will have the best medical care possible and that this backlog of disability claims that's been plaguing us for a number of years will be cleared as rapidly as possible.

We've done this in a way that's also fiscally responsible. We have found every dollar we could that was left unspent from previous years and returned that to the taxpayers. At the same time, we make sure that our veterans and our men and women in uniform have everything that they need to do their job.

Our committee has also been very committed to ensuring that their families are taken care of and that the Defense Department schools on bases are the best that they can be and in the best condition that they can be in. I know all of us as parents are concerned about the quality of our kids' education. The last thing that a man or woman who's deployed at a United States base overseas—we don't want them to worry about the caliber of the school that their children are attending. So we've also placed emphasis on the ability of our military base commanders to contract with the State in which they're located to set up charter schools at their military bases if the base happens to be located in an area where the local schools can't provide the quality that they need.

We have in this appropriations bill, as I say, fully funded the Department of Veterans Affairs. Some of this money is advance appropriated. So while we've got a total funding level in this bill for 2014 of $73.3 billion, that's

$1.4 billion more than last year. We provide an additional $2.1 billion more than last year for the Department of Veterans Affairs. But of that increase, $1.9 billion was provided as an advance appropriation from previous years.

The Congress began several years ago to appropriate funding in advance for our Veterans Affairs Department to ensure that because of the uncertainty and the unpredictability of the appropriations cycle, again, we want our men and women in uniform and our veterans to have absolute peace of mind and no worries as they serve our country or as they move into retirement in the veterans hospital system, so we advance appropriate some of this money.

Any reductions that we made in this bill, again, were done to make sure that we're doing our part to control spending at a time of record debt and deficit, which is at the top of our minds. As fiscal conservatives, we want to ensure that we have done everything in our power to reduce the debt and to reduce the burden that is passed on to our children and grandchildren.

So we have not provided funding in the bill for 10 military construction projects that the committee believed it lacked sufficient justification for. And we funded only what the Department of Defense expects to spend in fiscal year 2014 for six military construction projects. We've also reduced the funding available for the Contingency Construction account, which has not even been used since fiscal year 2008. Our marvelous staff did a good job in identifying $659 million in unobligated balances from previous years for construction projects that have been left unspent, and we're able to return that to taxpayers.

We have also reduced the Department of Veterans Affairs request for funding in a program where they substantially overestimated their projections. The scope of this committee's jurisdiction also includes military memorials and cemeteries. We've made sure those are fully funded and that our memorials and cemeteries here in the United States and around the world are going to be well tended and that veterans, no matter where they may be in the United States, will be able to get the health care and benefits that they have earned by their service to this country.

□ 1450

We did everything we could in this bill to ensure that our men and women in uniform are taken care of and that our veterans are taken care of, but we are very concerned about the backlog in the disability claims that the VA has accumulated. The VA has promised us that they would have the backlog cleared up by the year 2015, so the bill contains very strong language that holds the VA to account ensuring that they will give the committee and the Congress detailed accounts and reports to ensure that they stay on target. Mr. KINGSTON of Georgia is going to offer an amendment later, which I intend to accept, to help ensure that the VA holds themselves to the standard that they have set for themselves to reduce the backlog.

And then, finally, Madam Chairman, I want to mention something that we are particularly exercised about. Our committee chairman, HAL ROGERS from Kentucky, has told us a story that I have never forgotten of a young man who I believe was wounded in Afghanistan—Iraq, who lost one eye, lost eyesight in one eye. When he left the service to go into the VA system, in order to save his remaining eye, he had to have medical records that could be read by the VA doctors. And because of bureaucratic inefficiency and pure idiocy, we've got a completely separate set of medical records in the DOD and the Veterans Administration. And for years, taxpayers have spent upwards of a billion dollars or more over the last 10 years to get the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs operating in a single, using a single unified medical record so that when a young man like this moves out of active service and into the VA, when it's a time-critical surgery such as this young man needed to have to save his eyesight, that the doctors in the VA could read those medical records and get him the help that he needs. But, sadly, because of bureaucratic inefficiency and refusal to cooperate—and, of course, we're all human and we're all flawed, but there's this instinctive human, I think, reaction to make sure you protect your own turf. Whatever it is, the VA and the DOD have not adopted a unified medical record. As a result, this young man lost his eyesight. He could not get the surgery he needed in the VA, and he is now permanently blinded as a result of the failure of these two departments to do their job.

Now, the week before last when we were considering this bill in committee, the Secretary of Defense, Mr. Hagel, said that the DOD was just going to go ahead and adopt their own medical record system separate from the VA. This is just unacceptable. I ask all my colleagues in Congress to work with Mr. BISHOP and me and to work with Chairman ROGERS, Ranking Member LOWEY, with the members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, the members of the Armed Services Authorizing Committee and the members of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee so that we develop identical, parallel language that compels the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to come up with a single, integrated, unified medical record so that no one will ever suffer the fate that this young man did who is now permanently blinded because of bureaucratic inefficiency.

It's unacceptable. The Congress won't stand for it any longer, and we've got strong language in this bill and will continue to work to strengthen it to ensure that these men and women, as they move from their days of uniformed service to the country into the VA, that it is seamless, that it is easy, that they can get their disability claims handled in a timely and efficient manner and that they can get their medical records read quickly and efficiently by the doctors in the VA system who do such a good job.

We deeply appreciate our extraordinary staff working together with my good friend from Georgia (Mr. BISHOP) in a truly bipartisan way. I'm proud to present to the House, Madam Chairman, the 2014 Military Construction and VA appropriations bill for approval by the House, a bill that is fiscally conservative and responsible yet fully funds and takes care of our men and women in uniform and our veterans in a way that they deserve, because our men and women who have fought so valiantly for this country deserve nothing less than the very best of the United States Congress, and we've done that for them in this bill today.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2014 (H.R. 2216)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2013 Enacted	FY 2014 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
TITLE I - DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE					
Military construction, Army	1,682,639	1,119,875	1,099,875	-582,764	-20,000
Military construction, Navy and Marine Corps	1,547,615	1,700,269	1,616,281	+68,666	-83,988
Military construction, Air Force	322,220	1,156,573	1,127,273	+805,053	-29,300
Military construction, Defense-Wide	3,578,841	3,985,300	3,707,923	+129,082	-277,377
Total, Active components	7,131,315	7,962,017	7,551,352	+420,037	-410,665
Military construction, Army National Guard	613,185	320,815	315,815	-297,370	-5,000
Supplemental (P.L. 113-2) (Emergency)	24,235	---	---	-24,235	---
Subtotal	637,420	320,815	315,815	-321,605	-5,000
Military construction, Air National Guard	42,344	119,800	107,800	+65,456	-12,000
Military construction, Army Reserve	305,540	174,060	174,060	-131,480	---
Military construction, Navy Reserve	49,482	32,976	32,976	-16,506	---
Military construction, Air Force Reserve	10,968	45,659	45,659	+34,691	---
Total, Reserve components	1,045,754	693,310	676,310	-369,444	-17,000
Total, Military construction	8,177,069	8,655,327	8,227,662	+50,593	-427,665
North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program	253,909	239,700	199,700	-54,209	-40,000
Family housing construction, Army	4,636	44,008	44,008	+39,372	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Army	529,521	512,871	512,871	-16,650	---
Family housing construction, Navy and Marine Corps	102,080	73,407	73,407	-28,673	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Navy and Marine Corps	377,852	389,844	389,844	+11,992	---
Family housing construction, Air Force	83,740	76,360	76,360	-7,380	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Air Force	497,331	388,598	388,598	-108,733	---
Family housing operation and maintenance, Defense-Wide	52,186	55,845	55,845	+3,659	---
Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund	1,784	1,780	1,780	-4	---
Total, Family housing	1,649,130	1,542,713	1,542,713	-106,417	---
Chemical demilitarization construction, Defense-Wide	150,849	122,536	122,536	-28,313	---
Base realignment and closure:					
Base realignment and closure account, 1990	408,987	---	---	-408,987	---
Base realignment and closure account, 2005	126,570	---	---	-126,570	---
Base realignment and closure account	---	451,357	451,357	+451,357	---
Total, Base realignment and closure	535,557	451,357	451,357	-84,200	---
Military Construction, Army (Sec. 126)	---	---	-89,000	-89,000	-89,000
Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps (Sec.127)	---	---	-49,920	-49,920	-49,920
Military Construction, Defense-Wide (Sec. 128)	-20,000	---	-358,400	-338,400	-358,400
Rescission (P.L. 113-6):					
Base Realignment and Closure, 2005	-132,513	---	---	+132,513	---
Military construction, Army, Planning and design FY12 (Sec. 129)	---	---	-50,000	-50,000	-50,000
Military construction, Defense-Wide, Unspecified minor construction FY09 and FY10 (Sec. 130)	---	---	-16,470	-16,470	-16,470
Military construction, Air National Guard, Unspecified minor construction FY09 and FY10 (Sec. 131)	---	---	-45,623	-45,623	-45,623
42 USC 3374 (Sec. 132)	---	---	-50,000	-50,000	-50,000
Reduction of funds (Sec. 133)	---	---	-4,668	-4,668	-4,668
Navy Land Transfer (P.L. 113-6)	10,989	---	---	-10,989	---

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2014 (H.R. 2216)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2013 Enacted	FY 2014 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps (Sec. 135)	---	---	75,000	+75,000	+75,000
Total, title I, Department of Defense	10,624,990	11,011,633	9,954,887	-670,103	-1,056,746
Appropriations	(10,753,268)	(11,011,633)	(10,614,300)	(-138,968)	(-397,333)
Rescissions	(-152,513)	---	(-659,413)	(-506,900)	(-659,413)
Emergency appropriations	(24,235)	---	---	(-24,235)	---
TITLE II - DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS					
Veterans Benefits Administration					
Compensation and pensions	60,599,855	71,248,171	71,248,171	+10,648,316	---
Readjustment benefits	12,023,458	13,135,898	13,135,898	+1,112,440	---
Veterans insurance and indemnities	104,600	77,567	77,567	-27,033	---
Veterans housing benefit program fund:					
(indefinite)	184,859	---	---	-184,859	---
(Limitation on direct loans)	(500)	(500)	(500)	---	---
Administrative expenses	157,656	158,430	158,430	+774	---
Vocational rehabilitation loans program account	19	5	5	-14	---
(Limitation on direct loans)	(2,729)	(2,500)	(2,500)	(-229)	---
Administrative expenses	346	354	354	+8	---
Native American veteran housing loan program account	1,088	1,109	1,109	+21	---
Total, Veterans Benefits Administration	73,071,881	84,621,534	84,621,534	+11,549,653	---
Veterans Health Administration					
Medical services:					
Advance from prior year	(41,354,000)	(43,557,000)	(43,557,000)	(+2,203,000)	---
Current year request	154,845	157,500	---	-154,845	-157,500
Advance appropriation, FY 2015	43,557,000	45,015,527	45,015,527	+1,458,527	---
Supplemental (P.L. 113-2) (Emergency)	21,000	---	---	-21,000	---
Subtotal	43,732,845	45,173,027	45,015,527	+1,282,682	-157,500
Medical support and compliance:					
Advance from prior year	(5,746,000)	(6,033,000)	(6,033,000)	(+287,000)	---
Advance appropriation, FY 2015	6,033,000	5,879,700	5,879,700	-153,300	---
Subtotal	6,033,000	5,879,700	5,879,700	-153,300	---
Medical facilities:					
Advance from prior year	(5,441,000)	(4,872,000)	(4,872,000)	(-569,000)	---
Advance appropriation, FY 2015	4,872,000	4,739,000	4,739,000	-133,000	---
Supplemental (P.L. 113-2) (Emergency)	6,000	---	---	-6,000	---
Subtotal	4,878,000	4,739,000	4,739,000	-139,000	---
Medical and prosthetic research	582,091	585,664	585,664	+3,573	---
Medical care cost recovery collections:					
Offsetting collections	-2,527,000	-2,485,000	-2,485,000	+42,000	---
Appropriations (indefinite)	2,527,000	2,485,000	2,485,000	-42,000	---
Subtotal	---	---	---	---	---
DoD-VA Joint Medical Funds (transfers out)	(-279,720)	(-254,257)	(-271,000)	(+8,720)	(-16,743)
DoD-VA Joint Medical Funds (by transfer)	(279,720)	(254,257)	(271,000)	(-8,720)	(+16,743)
DoD-VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund (Transfer out)	(-15,000)	(-15,000)	(-15,000)	---	---

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2014 (H.R. 2216)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2013 Enacted	FY 2014 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
DoD-VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund (by transfer)	(15,000)	(15,000)	(15,000)	---	---
Total, Veterans Health Administration	55,225,936	56,377,391	56,219,891	+993,955	-157,500
Appropriations	(736,936)	(743,164)	(585,664)	(-151,272)	(-157,500)
Emergency appropriations	(27,000)	---	---	(-27,000)	---
Advance appropriations, FY 2015	(54,462,000)	(55,634,227)	(55,634,227)	(+1,172,227)	---
Advances from prior year appropriations	(52,541,000)	(54,462,000)	(54,462,000)	(+1,921,000)	---
National Cemetery Administration					
National Cemetery Administration	258,026	250,000	250,000	-8,026	---
Supplemental (P.L. 113-2) (Emergency)	2,100	---	---	-2,100	---
Subtotal	260,126	250,000	250,000	-10,126	---
Departmental Administration					
General administration	424,312	403,023	403,023	-21,289	---
General operating expenses, VBA	2,161,910	2,455,490	2,455,490	+293,580	---
Information technology systems	3,324,117	3,683,344	3,683,344	+359,227	---
Supplemental (P.L. 113-2) (Emergency)	531	---	---	-531	---
Subtotal	3,324,648	3,683,344	3,683,344	+358,696	---
Office of Inspector General	114,885	116,411	116,411	+1,526	---
Construction, major projects	531,938	342,130	342,130	-189,808	---
Supplemental (P.L. 113-2) (Emergency)	207,000	---	---	-207,000	---
Subtotal	738,938	342,130	342,130	-396,808	---
Construction, minor projects	606,922	714,870	714,870	+107,948	---
Grants for construction of State extended care facilities	84,915	82,650	82,650	-2,265	---
Grants for the construction of veterans cemeteries	45,954	44,650	44,650	-1,304	---
Total, Departmental Administration	7,502,484	7,842,568	7,842,568	+340,084	---
Emergency appropriations	(207,531)	---	---	(-207,531)	---
Administrative Provisions					
FY 2014 Advance Rescission (Sec. 230)	---	---	-156,000	-156,000	-156,000
FY 2014 Current Reduction (Sec. 230)	---	---	-24,000	-24,000	-24,000
Section 225					
Medical services	1,498,500	1,400,000	1,400,000	-98,500	---
(Rescission)	-1,500,000	-1,400,000	-1,400,000	+100,000	---
Medical support and compliance	199,800	100,000	100,000	-99,800	---
(Rescission)	-200,000	-100,000	-100,000	+100,000	---
Medical facilities	249,750	250,000	250,000	+250	---
(Rescission)	-250,000	-250,000	-250,000	---	---
Total. Administrative Provisions	-1,950	---	-180,000	-178,050	-180,000
Total, title II	136,058,477	149,091,493	148,753,993	+12,695,516	-337,500
Appropriations	(83,309,846)	(95,207,266)	(95,025,766)	(+11,715,920)	(-181,500)
Emergency appropriations	(236,631)	---	---	(-236,631)	---
Rescissions	(-1,950,000)	(-1,750,000)	(-1,750,000)	(+200,000)	---
Advance appropriations, FY 2015	(54,462,000)	(55,634,227)	(55,634,227)	(+1,172,227)	---
Advances from prior year appropriations	(52,541,000)	(54,462,000)	(54,462,000)	(+1,921,000)	---
(Limitation on direct loans)	(3,229)	(3,000)	(3,000)	(-229)	---

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2014 (H.R. 2216)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2013 Enacted	FY 2014 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
Discretionary	(63,145,705)	(64,629,857)	(64,292,357)	(+1,146,652)	(-337,500)
Advances from prior year less FY 2015 advances	-1,921,000	-1,172,227	-1,172,227	+748,773	---
Less emergency appropriations	-236,631	---	---	+236,631	---
Net discretionary	(60,988,074)	(63,457,630)	(63,120,130)	(+2,132,056)	(-337,500)
Mandatory	(72,912,772)	(84,461,636)	(84,461,636)	(+11,548,864)	---
Total mandatory and net discretionary	133,900,846	147,919,266	147,581,766	+13,680,920	-337,500
TITLE III - RELATED AGENCIES					
American Battle Monuments Commission					
Salaries and expenses	61,348	58,200	57,980	-3,368	-220
Foreign currency fluctuations account	14,818	14,100	14,100	-718	---
Total, American Battle Monuments Commission	76,166	72,300	72,080	-4,086	-220
U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims					
Salaries and expenses	31,665	35,408	35,272	+3,607	-136
Department of Defense - Civil					
Cemeterial Expenses, Army					
Salaries and expenses	64,146	45,800	70,685	+6,539	+24,885
Construction program	100,412	---	---	-100,412	---
Total, Cemeterial Expenses, Army	164,558	45,800	70,685	-93,873	+24,885
Armed Forces Retirement Home - Trust Fund					
Operation and maintenance	63,941	66,800	66,400	+2,459	-400
Capital program	1,950	1,000	1,000	-950	---
Armed Forces Retirement Home - General Fund					
Capital program	---	---	---	---	---
Total, Armed Forces Retirement Home	65,891	67,800	67,400	+1,509	-400
Total, title III	338,280	221,308	245,437	-92,843	+24,129
TITLE IV - OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS					
Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps	150,768	---	---	-150,768	---
Rescission (P.L. 112-10)	-150,768	---	---	+150,768	---
Total, title IV	---	---	---	---	---
Grand total	147,021,747	160,324,434	158,954,317	+11,932,570	-1,370,117
Appropriations	(94,401,394)	(106,440,207)	(105,885,503)	(+11,484,109)	(-554,704)
Rescissions	(-2,102,513)	(-1,750,000)	(-2,409,413)	(-306,900)	(-659,413)
Emergency appropriations	(260,866)	---	---	(-260,866)	---
Advance appropriations, FY 2015	(54,462,000)	(55,634,227)	(55,634,227)	(+1,172,227)	---
Overseas contingency operations	---	---	---	---	---
Advances from prior year appropriations	(52,541,000)	(54,462,000)	(54,462,000)	(+1,921,000)	---

Military Construction - Veterans Affairs - and Related Agencies Appropriations Act - FY 2014 (H.R. 2216)
(Amounts in thousands)

	FY 2013 Enacted	FY 2014 Request	Bill	Bill vs. Enacted	Bill vs. Request
(By transfer)	(294,720)	(269,257)	(286,000)	(-8,720)	(+16,743)
(Transfer out)	(-294,720)	(-269,257)	(-286,000)	(+8,720)	(-16,743)
(Limitation on direct loans)	(3,229)	(3,000)	(3,000)	(-229)	---

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Chairman, as you know, the allocation provides $73.3 billion for the FY14 Military Construction-VA bill, which is $1.4 billion above the FY13 and $1 billion below the request. In my opinion, the allocation is what we could have expected had the Republican leadership addressed sequestration.

Madam Chairman, I know some folks will say that title 2 of this bill is exempt from sequestration and that is why the bill received a decent allocation, but I just want to point out that the funding in the bill largely mirrors the administration's request which does not reflect sequestration, even for the portions of the bill that were not exempted. I think that we all agree that we need to address the sequester, and I hope that we do it in the near future, because if we don't, the long-term effects will be devastating to our economy.

With that being said, I'm pleased to join Chairman CULBERSON as the House takes up the FY14 appropriations bill for Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and related agencies. The MilCon-VA bill is critically important to the strength and the well-being of our military, our veterans, and the families who sacrifice so much to defend our country. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I find it quite fitting that we are debating this bill immediately after observing Memorial Day last week.

Working with Chairman CULBERSON and the members of our subcommittee, we have crafted a bill that will address the funding needs for military construction and family housing for our troops and their families, as well as other quality-of-life construction projects. In addition, it will provide funding for many important VA programs, as well as agencies like the Veterans Court of Appeals and the American Battle Monuments Commission.

The bill before us today touches every soldier, sailor, marine, and airman. In addition, the bill also will impact military spouses, their children, and every veteran that participates in VA programs.

I want to commend the chairman for his work. Together, we sat through numerous hearings, gaining valuable insight to the workings of all the agencies under the subcommittee's jurisdiction. Also, we would like to thank our subcommittee members and recognize them for their hard work on this bill. I believe that the minority was treated fairly during this process, and I want to thank the chairman for ensuring this bipartisan result.

Chairman CULBERSON has already provided the funding highlights in the bill, and I will not repeat them all, but I would like to point out a few items that I believe are extremely important.

The bill before us today includes $797 million for the renovation and replacement of 17 Department of Defense schools. I believe that providing the funds for the DOD schools will help our servicemembers' children get a quality education in safe facilities and will give our servicemembers peace of mind.

I'm pleased that the bill includes $151 million for the third increment of the Landstuhl Medical Center replacement in Germany. As you know, a large portion of the serious casualties from Afghanistan are treated there, and I'm pleased to see that we are making this important investment.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is funded at $63.1 billion, and overall, the subcommittee recommendation meets the discretionary budget request in all areas of administrative expenses, research, information technology, and facilities.

In addition, the bill contains $55.6 billion in advance appropriations for medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities at the VA, which is $1.1 billion above the amount included in FY13. Madam Chairman, I strongly believe that advance funding provides timely and predictable resources for the veterans' health care system, and I'm so glad that we have been able to do it now for this 5th year in a row.

Now, I know that a lot of Members of this body are deeply concerned about the claims backlog and the electronic health records challenge. Trust me, the members of our committee, especially Chairman CULBERSON and I, have spoken directly with Secretary Shinseki about these issues numerous times, and I believe that our bill provides the resources and the accountability needed to address these two problems:

First, the bill funds the general operating expenses for the VBA, which will support 20,851 claims processors, which is 94 more than FY2013, and all 94 new claims processors will work disability claims;

Second, the bill fully funds the Veterans Benefits Management System at $155 million and the Veterans Claim Intake Program at $136.4 million.

□ 1500

These two efforts should speed up the VA's efforts to take old claims that are filed on paper and convert them into digital files that are easily searchable by claims processors, thus speeding up the claims process.

Second, we include a monthly reporting requirement every 30 days for the VA to provide Congress with several statistics, such as the average wait time at each regional office, rating inventory that has been pending for 125 days, rating claims advocacy, and month-to-month updates in changes in those statistics.

Third, we require a report on the VA's expedited claims initiative that was announced just a few weeks ago. This report should give the committee and the Congress insight into whether or not the Secretary's new initiatives are having positive results.

Finally, the bill directs the VA and the Department of Defense toward one integrated electronic health record system in bill language, and it restricts the availability of funds for the development of a system that meets the requirements of being single, joint, common, and integrated with open architecture and is the sole system used by both the Veterans Administration and the Department of Defense. This initiative would ensure that veterans get their records to the VA electronically, thus reducing the number of claims filed on paper and speeding up the claims process.

Now, the committee's action—and I want to make this point clear—the committee's action and this bill do not mandate the adoption of a particular system, only that it be a single system that is used by both Departments. I don't think that we should get into the business of picking the software, but I do believe that by mandating a single system between the Department of Defense and the VA, that veteran claims in the future will not continue to fall victim to the slow inefficiencies that we're dealing with today.

Madam Chair, I believe that we have a strong, bipartisan bill that supports our military, their families, and our veterans. I would hate to see the hard work of our committee up-ended by contentious partisan riders intended to serve in scoring political points instead of those that serve our Nation. I also believe that the most important parts of this bill are the resources and accountability provided to assist the VA in tackling this outrageous claims backlog.

So I say to my colleagues that our committee strongly shares the deep commitment of this body to fixing the claims backlog issue. We looked at numerous approaches and further believe that our bill has found the optimal approach in dealing with this pressing concern of our veterans.

Before I close, Madam Chair, I would like to recognize the staff for all of the hard work and time that they've put into this bill. From the minority committee staff, I would like to thank Matt Washington, as well as Michael Reed and Adam McCombs from my personal staff. From the majority committee staff, I would like to thank Donna Shabazz, Sue Quantius, Sarah Young, and Tracey Russell.

I would also like to thank Mrs. LOWEY and Mr. ROGERS, the chairman and the ranking member, who served so valiantly and who are so diligently trying to seek the well-being of our servicemen and -women, their families, and our veterans.

At this time, Madam Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, the House budget that we adopted set a total spending limit of $967 billion in the 3 years that the Republicans have had the majority in the House and the leadership of Chairman HAL ROGERS of Kentucky. For the first time since

World War II, we have reduced annual spending from year to year, each year, under Chairman ROGERS' leadership.

It's also, I think, important for the country to know that one of the first and most important responsibilities of the chairman of the full committee is to take that total spending number that's given to us by Chairman RYAN's Budget Committee, that $967 billion—Chairman ROGERS, one of his first responsibilities is to take that $967 billion and use his best judgment to allocate or divide that money among the subcommittees of the Appropriations Committee. And it's a real tribute to this good man's commitment, a demonstration of his commitment to our men and women in uniform, a vivid illustration of the bipartisan nature of this bill, that with the help of Ranking Member LOWEY, that Chairman ROGERS gave this subcommittee for military construction and VA allocation that enabled us to fully fund the request to the military and the Veterans Affairs.

It is my privilege now, Madam Chairman, to recognize the distinguished chairman of the full committee, HAL ROGERS of Kentucky, who has done so much to save our taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, and do everything that can be done to help support our men and women in uniform, and yield him as much time as he may consume.

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Madam Chairman, I thank the chairman for the generous introduction.

I rise in support of this, the first of 12 appropriations bills that I hope to bring to the floor under regular order. Although we received the President's budget nearly 2 months beyond the deadline, I have every intention of drafting and considering all 12 appropriations measures in a timely fashion and in the traditional open process that allows all Members to have their say in how taxpayer dollars should be spent.

As we kick off the appropriations season on the floor today, we face some of the most challenging circumstances in recent memory—a tardy Presidential budget, a divided Congress, the ham-handed cuts of sequestration, and historically low funding levels.

Given our tight budget, my committee has and will continue to prioritize funding in areas of the highest national need—our security and enforcement of law. However, virtually all areas of the government will face cuts this year, including critical national security programs.

Clearly, this is an austere budget year, to put it mildly. Our top line number is severely low and billions apart from the Senate's number. It is my sincere hope that there will soon be a budget compromise that will undo the harmful sequestration law and give us a single common top line allocation that we can work with the Senate to pass all of the funding of the government.

In spite of all this, I want to reiterate my commitment to regular order. This is not a pie-in-the-sky endeavor. It's what our Founding Fathers wanted and directed in the Constitution. Under regular order, each of my esteemed colleagues in this body will have their chance to put their stamp on this bill, to have their voices heard and represented on these must-pass bills.

We have a lot of work to do in a very limited amount of time, so I suggest we get down to it. Today, we are considering the Military Construction and VA bill, a truly bipartisan effort that this entire body can and should support.

This bill funds critical Department of Defense infrastructure that gives our men and women in uniform the quality of life they deserve, including hospitals, schools, and family housing. This bill also includes $63.1 billion to provide our veterans with the benefits and care they've earned for their service.

Notably, we support medical treatment for 6.5 million veterans, including funding for traumatic brain injury treatment, suicide prevention, and important mental health care programs.

This bill also addresses two of the VA's biggest problems, Madam Chairman—the disgraceful disability claims backlog and the lack of a seamless coordinated Department of Defense-Veterans electronic health record system.

□ 1510

The bill includes funding that will jump-start efforts to clean up the backlog and force DOD and VA to get moving on a system that should have been in place years ago.

But this is not the easiest of budget times. While most of the funding in this bill is not subject to sequestration, we could not in good conscience let a single dollar in this bill go to waste. Every nickel and dime appropriated was carefully assessed to ensure these funds are used properly, efficiently and responsibly.

We took the difficult but responsible step to reduce military construction funding to offset the increases in VA spending, but we made these reductions without affecting military readiness or effectiveness. To make sure that our careful work in this bill does not go to waste, we've implemented strict oversight protocols, and we have included certain benchmarks to help guarantee that disability claims are not piling up again and that we aren't throwing away precious taxpayer dollars as we try to get this DOD–VA electronic health records system up and running.

Before concluding, Madam Chairman, I would like to spend a half-minute here thanking the chairman of the MilCon Subcommittee on our committee, JOHN CULBERSON, for his time and attention to this bill and for his dedication and perseverance, as well as to thank the work of the ranking member, Mr. BISHOP. These two gentlemen of the House, dedicated appropriators, have spent untold hours working with each other to try to come to agreement on the items in this bill. It has worked, and it is a good example, perhaps the best I can think of, in which we see that bipartisanship in support of our military and our veterans takes place. So I want to congratulate Mr. CULBERSON and Mr. BISHOP for a job well done, and we thank you for your bipartisanship.

Madam Chairman, I think this bill is one that Members on both sides of the aisle can wholeheartedly support to keep our military in fighting form and to give our veterans the benefits that they have so sincerely earned, many of them in the loss of limb, some in the loss of life. So I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. At this time, I yield 3 minutes to the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, who, along with the entire leadership and Members on this side of the aisle, is committed to this bipartisan work product in support of our military construction needs and our veterans, the distinguished gentlelady from New York (Mrs. LOWEY).

Mrs. LOWEY. I would like to thank distinguished Ranking Member BISHOP. I would like to thank Chairman CULBERSON. I would like to thank Chairman ROGERS. I would like to thank all of the outstanding staffs for putting together a really good bipartisan bill. It's an important bill, and I know how hard you worked together to produce a really good product, and we thank you.

This bill does represent a reasonable approach and continues a long commitment to our veterans and our military facilities. It continues the bipartisan tradition of providing funding levels that Members on both sides of the aisle could agree are appropriate while avoiding contentious legislative riders that complicate passage.

However, the Republican majority's refusal to go to conference to forge a bipartisan agreement on the budget resolution is really unacceptable. This imperils this year's appropriations process, making it nearly impossible to move all 12 bills. Instead, it is likely that we will consider in the full House only a few bills with reasonable allocations, including MilCon-VA, while others are left in limbo indefinitely until we pass a continuing resolution.

I am optimistic that this bill has a good chance of enactment as long as we don't attach any controversial riders, but other important priorities will assuredly suffer. While veterans programs are exempt from sequestration, $73.3 billion provided in the bill largely mirrors the administration's request and does not reflect sequestration even for the portions of the bill that were not exempted. In fact, the differences between this bill and the administration's request are relatively small: an adjustment of $1.05 billion, due to bid savings and other project adjustments, and the misguided decision not to provide $185 million for the requested 2014 civilian pay raise.

If the MilCon-VA bill assumes the sequester cuts have been replaced, why

can't we join with the administration and the Senate and assume it will be addressed for the other bills?

On a positive note, this bill would better support our female veterans who are struggling with the trauma of sexual assault and would support those in need of prosthetics. It also continues to focus on the mental health needs of our Nation's veterans.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I yield the gentlelady an additional 1 minute.

Mrs. LOWEY. The bill, which takes several steps related to the shameful veterans claims backlog, would hire 94 additional claims processors; provide $155 million for the Veterans Benefit Management System and $136 million for the Veterans Claims Intake Program in order to significantly speed up claims by converting old paper files into digital files; restrict funds to force DOD and the VA to use a seamless electronic health records system; and require the VA to provide monthly reports.

We cannot accept any further excuses. The VA must make progress. This is a good bill. I hope we can avoid adding contentious and unnecessary legislative riders today, and I hope that the chairman from Kentucky's optimism about sequestration reflected in the allocation for the first bill is proven true.

I commend the chairman and ranking member once again on their good work, and I urge your support.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, at this time, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY).

Mr. FORTENBERRY. First, let me thank Chairman CULBERSON for his stalwart leadership on this important bipartisan measure. Let me also thank Ranking Member BISHOP as well for his leadership and support.

Madam Chair, many people in America want Congress to find constructive solutions, seek good answers, overcome problems, and say ''yes'' to our essential needs. While Congress is stuck on certain areas, this bill takes a bipartisan step forward in defense of our country and in service to our veterans. This bill says ''yes'' in a bipartisan manner to meet our Department of Defense infrastructure needs and to properly care for those who have served us so well, our veterans.

The bill spends a little bit less than the President asked for and a little bit more than last year. Projects that are not justifiable are removed, but others receive increases. The bill also pushes forward, as we've heard, a seamless transition of care when our warfighters leave active service by integrating their medical records and expeditiously dealing with a very serious claims backlog. I am pleased as well that my colleagues have continued funding for the headquarters construction of the United States Strategic Command. STRATCOM is an important force in protecting our Nation from nuclear threats.

Madam Chair, we need to continue to work hard and smart to reduce budgets while also delivering essential policy services that are necessary and fundamental at the Federal level. I think that this bill accomplishes that goal. I think we also accomplish the goal of doing what is just and what is right.

□ 1520

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. At this time, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE), the ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security and a distinguished member of the MilCon-VA Subcommittee.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. I thank my colleague for yielding.

Madam Chairman, I rise today in qualified support of the fiscal year 2014 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

I want to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for their leadership and commend my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for a cordial, timely, and deliberative process.

I have to caution, however, that this bill's relatively generous allocation must be viewed in the context of the overall fiscal year 2014 appropriations process. To get workable allocations for the two appropriations bills we will consider this week, the majority has drastically underfunded other critical appropriations bills, from educational research, to health care, to repairing and maintaining our Nation's crumbling infrastructure.

Earlier today, I joined with many colleagues to vote against the rule providing for consideration of the bill before us, because the resolution requires this body to carry out the fiscal year 2014 appropriations process within the framework of the so-called ''Ryan budget,'' which doubles down on sequestration and will have devastating consequences as our Nation continues its economic recovery.

So the overall appropriations process is in deep trouble. But the bill before us gives the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs adequate resources to address several critical challenges faced by our military and veterans community. I'm particularly pleased the bill would fully fund the President's request for military construction projects at Fort Bragg, which is adjacent to my district.

The bill also provides critical funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs to assure that those who have served our country receive the benefits and services that they need and deserve. Our subcommittee paid particular heed to the ongoing disabilities claims backlog issue at the VA. The bill provides nearly $300 million for the continued implementation of electronic management systems and improved processing of both new and existing claims.

I'm also pleased the bill provides robust funding for medical and prosthetic research, suicide prevention and mental health treatment, addressing unacceptable levels of unemployment among veterans, and pressing to end veteran homelessness.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. These are priorities, and this is a bill I hope all of our colleagues will be able to support.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, at this time I yield 2 minutes to a distinguished and valued member of our subcommittee, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DIAZ-BALART).

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Madam Chairman, I rise today in strong support of the fiscal year 2014 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

Let me first of all thank Chairman CULBERSON and your staff. You've done a spectacular job. This has been among the most inclusive processes that I've ever been involved with. So thank you.

Madam Chairwoman, this bill includes almost $10 billion for critical military construction projects, as well as imperative funding for the NATO Security Investment Fund.

Our bill fully funds the fiscal year 2014 National Guard and Reserve construction programs as requested, by the way, as well as fully funding the family housing construction program.

The bill also includes $55.6 billion in fiscal year 2015 advanced appropriations for VA medical care, the level approved in the House budget resolution and the same, by the way, as was actually requested.

This bill provides targeted funding for various information technology programs to ensure that the VA can tackle the enormous backlog of compensation claims, something that this chair and Chairman ROGERS have already talked about.

These funds will provide the resources that the VA indicates it requires to meet its goals of ending the disability compensation claims backlog by 2015.

Additionally, it includes stringent reporting requirements for the VA so the Members of Congress and the American people can have direct oversight on the progress of the claims backlog.

The committee also included report language to address the issue of prescription painkiller abuse.

This important bill also funds critical programs like the American Battle Monuments Commission, the United States Court of Appeals for Veteran Claims, as well as cemeterial expenses, including Arlington National Cemetery.

So I thank the chairman and urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this very important piece of legislation that has been done in a very bipartisan way.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. At this time, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR), a distinguished member of the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. CUELLAR. Madam Chair, I've been concerned also, as my ranking member and as the chairman also of the committee, the gentleman from Texas, about the claims backlog that exists at the VA.

Veterans of all generations deserve a benefits system that is easy to navigate and responsive to their needs. Currently, the VA is still experiencing a huge backlog in processing claims. As of May 2013, the VA claims totaled 843,000, with more than two-thirds that have been pending over 125 days.

Currently, in my congressional district, we're working with over 205 veterans: 60 them are from Laredo, 30 of them from the valley, and 115 in San Antonio with outstanding claims with the VA that have been unresolved for 18 to 24 months, which is unacceptable and shameful.

I am pleased that the chairman and the ranking member have worked in a bipartisan manner to make sure the Veterans Benefits Administration is able to support 20,851 claims processors.

Additionally, the bill includes the necessary funding so that old claims filed on paper can be converted to digital files, making them more accessible and researchable.

I also support the inclusion of the monthly reporting requirement of the claims backlog, so that way we can put performance measures also to make sure that we get rid of this backlog.

Finally, I know also my good friend will be having another amendment that I support with him, which is that if the VA doesn't do its work, I think some of those bureaucrats should have their pay cut; because if the veterans are not getting their benefits, then I think that should affect the bureaucrats also.

I want to the thank the chairman and the ranking member for all their good work on this bipartisan bill, and I appreciate their efforts to ensure that veterans receive their benefits.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, I yield myself just a moment to particularly point out and thank my friend from Laredo.

Mr. CUELLAR and I have worked together since 1986 in the Texas Legislature. The people of the United States often read in the national press that Democrats and Republicans don't get along. That's just simply not true. HENRY CUELLAR and I have been the best of friends since 1986. Mr. BISHOP and I worked together beautifully on this subcommittee. This bill is a great example of bipartisan cooperation, and it's a privilege to work on this committee where we really don't pay attention to party labels as we try to do what is best for the country.

At this time, Madam Chairman, it's my privilege to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) for the purpose of a colloquy.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. First of all, I want to thank the chairman, my colleague from Texas, for putting together this critical bill. I know that Mr. CULBERSON has been a longtime advocate for the best care possible for our Nation's veterans, and I thank the chairman of the subcommittee for his continued leadership and, of course, that of the ranking member, my Georgia colleague, Mr. BISHOP.

Madam Chair, I rise today to bring attention to the recent tragic events at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. According to an April report by the inspector general and continued news stories, mismanagement and lack of oversight at the Atlanta facility contributed to at least four deaths. Additionally, the Atlanta VA Medical Center has admitted that the combination of a large volume of patients and a lack of appropriate tracking has led to patients ''slipping through the cracks.''

The mental health unit at the Atlanta VA Medical Center has been of particular concern and is at the center of these recent tragedies. Mental health is a critical component of care for our veterans, and as our soldiers continue to return home from war, we must ensure that they're receiving the attention and care that they deserve.

I would ask that as this bill moves forward, Madam Chair, to the Senate and to conference, that the chairman and the ranking member join me and the chairman of the authorizing committee to get answers from the Department of Veterans Affairs as to why we have yet to see those responsible held accountable and what changes the Atlanta VA Medical Center is going to make.

And I ask that question of the subcommittee chair.

□ 1530

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, I would say to the gentleman from Georgia that both Mr. BISHOP and I and the subcommittee are keenly aware of these terrible tragedies in Atlanta and the very critical and important inspector general's report, and we intend to aggressively pursue the recommendations in the inspector general's report and work with you and the delegation from Georgia to ensure that this does not happen again.

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Madam Chair, I thank the chairman.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. May I inquire how much time remains on our side?

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Georgia has 12½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Texas has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. At this time I'm delighted to yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the distinguished ranking member and distinguished chairman, and I know that they have worked collaboratively together on behalf of our veterans, so I rise in recognition of the important work that they have done and to compliment them for the work that involves fully funding the military construction and certainly something that rises every moment that I'm amongst veterans. Just recently, as I was in a town hall meeting and had the Veterans Affairs Department represented, the question came up about benefits. I was glad that the initiative that has been offered, all of us embraced it. All of us have been fighting to stop this backlog and to move this backlog forward. And now we see the funding of this initiative, and it is most important.

I am also glad that there's a focus on jobs for veterans. I will say that we need to do more, because when you talk to our veterans of various wars, particularly the Vietnam War, there's always the sense of lack of employment, along with those who come in from Iraq and Afghanistan.

But I do want to raise the point of what we have deemed ourselves into. We've deemed ourselves into a Ryan budget that causes a great deal of suffering: a cap of $967 billion versus the mark of $1.58 billion that would be more helpful that was produced by the consensus during the Budget Control Act. Basically, we are ignoring the suffering of the middle class, and we're allowing the sequestration to run rampant over those who are in need.

I can particularly say to you that teachers and schools in Texas are losing $67.8 million in education for children with disabilities; $51 million for 620 teachers. Head Start is going kaput with 4,800 children losing their seat. Military readiness is being challenged in Texas with 52,000 civilian Department of Defense employees furloughed. In law enforcement and public safety funds, Texas will lose $1.103 million.

And then when we look at the United States, we go far and beyond that. We're looking at the fires in the West, the devastation of what happened in West, Texas, and the tornadoes. And we see, for the Coast Guard, there's a 25 percent reduction. This is a crisis.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 30 seconds.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. This is a crisis not only in the making, Madam Chair, but it is a crisis that is going forward. Whether we're talking about the National Institutes of Health or the Centers for Disease Control, my main concern is that the middle class is suffering from the sequestration.

The Ryan budget cannot be deemed the appropriations cap as we go through this process of appropriations. There is a desperate need of responding to the middle class, allowing for the continuation of job creation, making

sure that we do not lose 125,000 in section 8 vouchers, rural rental assistance, or the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF SEQUESTRATION

The middle class are suffering and they need help. We need to stop the sequestration—now.

In Texas—

The state of Texas will greatly be affected by sequestration in the following ways:

Teachers and Schools: Texas will lose approximately $67.8 million for primary and secondary education, putting around 930 teacher and aide jobs at risk. In addition about 172,000 fewer students would be served and approximately 280 fewer schools would receive funding.

Education for Children With Disabilities: Texas will lose approximately $51 million for about 620 teachers, aides, and staff who help children with disabilities.

Head Start: Head Start and Early Head Start services would be eliminated for approximately 4,800 children in Texas, reducing access to critical early education.

Military Readiness: In Texas, approximately 52,000 civilian Department of Defense employees would be furloughed, reducing gross pay by around $274.8 million in total.

Law Enforcement and Public Safety Funds: Texas will lose about $1,103,000 in Justice Assistance Grants that support law enforcement, prosecution and courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, and crime victim and witness initiatives.

Job Search Assistance: Around 83,750 fewer Texans will get the help and skills they need to find employment as Texas will lose about $2,263,000 for job search assistance, referral, and placement, meaning.

Child Care: Up to 2300 disadvantaged and vulnerable children could lose access to child care, which is also essential for working parents to hold down a job.

Vaccines for Children: In Texas around 9,730 fewer children will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and Hepatitis B due to reduced funding for vaccinations.

Violence Against Women Grants: Texas could lose up to $543,000 to provide services to victims of domestic violence, resulting in up to 2,100 fewer victims being served.

Public Health: Texas will lose approximately $2,402,000 to help upgrade its ability to respond to public health threats including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological events. In addition, Texas will lose about $6,750,000 in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in around 2,800 fewer admissions to substance abuse programs. And the Texas State Department of Public Health will lose about $1,146,000 resulting in around 28,600 fewer HIV tests.

In the U.S.A.—

Across-the-board cuts from sequestration began in March, and the detrimental effects are gradually coming into focus. These cuts are diminishing the effectiveness of federal initiatives, with a direct impact on the lives of virtually every American. Highlights of specific cuts to vital services and investments that have been documented to date are outlined below.

Public Safety

1. Wildland Fire: U.S. Forest Service understaffed and under-equipped for fire season with 500 fewer firefighters, 50–70 fewer fire engines, and 2 fewer aircraft.

2. U.S. Coast Guard: 25 percent reduction in training, maintenance and drug interdiction patrols.

3. Extreme Weather: A 3–6 month delay in NOAA's weather satellite launch will increase costs and risk of inaccurate forecasts.

4. U.S. Park Police: Up to 10,640 combined furlough days for officers leave national landmarks understaffed and increase response time for emergencies.

5. Food Safety: Fewer FDA inspections, increasing risk of food-borne illness, even as Congress demands stricter food safety standards.

Health

1. National Institutes of Health:

$1.5 billion cut from life-saving research projects,

Estimated loss of more than 20,000 jobs and $3 billion in economic activity.

2. Centers for Disease Control: $285 million cut from research to detect and combat disease outbreaks, facilitate immunizations, plan for public health emergencies, conduct HIV/AIDS tests, and more.

3. Environmental Health: More than 3,200 furloughs and layoffs delay cleanup from nuclear weapons development in Washington, New Mexico, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Housing

1. Section 8 Vouchers:

a. 125,000 fewer vouchers.

b. 750 Public Housing Authorities terminating tenants within 3 months.

2. Rural rental assistance: 15,000 aid recipients affected, usually elderly, disabled, or single mothers.

3. Community Development Financial Institutions Fund: Up to thousands fewer units of affordable housing built.

Education and Science

1. Head Start and Early Head Start:

70,000 children will lose access,

Thousands of layoffs of teachers and aides.

2. Impact Aid: $68 million cut from schools that educate 950,000 children of military members, or who are otherwise federally connected, resulting in layoffs and larger class sizes.

3. Research: 1,000 fewer National Science Foundation grants and thousands fewer jobs.

National Security

1. Defense: $37 billion in FY13, largest drag on broader economic growth, includes:

a. Cancelled deployment of aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman,

b. Cancelled Army training rotations,

c. Grounded Air Force squadrons,

d. 800,000 civilian employees facing furloughs of 11 days, and

e. Reduced equipment and facilities maintenance.

2. Defense Health Program (DHP): $2.6 billion reduction will result in TRICARE funding being exhausted by August and delayed payments of TRICARE contracts.

The Judiciary and Legal Representation for Low-Income Americans

1. Public defenders: Up to 15 furlough days per public defender will delay trials and force courts to hire private attorneys for defendants at $125 per hour.

2. Judiciary: 20 percent reduction in electronic monitoring & drug testing of offenders.

3. Violence Against Women Grants: $20 million cut from grants for prevention and prosecution of violence against women.

Senior Citizens

1. Senior nutrition: 4 million fewer meals for low-income seniors.

2. Social Security Administration:

3,300 additional staff lost, increasing backlog of disability claims by nearly 100,000 and increasing processing time of claims to more than one year.

82,000 fewer continuing disability reviews, which save $9 for every $1 spent.

3. Medicare: Thousands of cancer patients turned away by cancer clinics due to cuts in provider payments.

Commerce and Economic Security

Small Business: lending guarantees drastically reduced.

Oil and gas drilling permits: 300–400 fewer oil & gas drilling permits processed, 150 fewer leases issued, resulting in $150 million loss to taxpayers.

Customs Border Protection: Wait times at land border ports of entry up to 6x longer.

National Parks and public lands: Reductions in 900 permanent and 1,000 seasonal positions will reduce public access and result in hundreds fewer trained firefighters.

Unemployment compensation: 10.7 percent cut in weekly benefits.

Fiscal Malpractice Results in Job Loss and Stunted Economic Growth—The Federal Reserve announced, ''Fiscal policy is restraining economic growth.'' The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and independent economists forecast sequestration costing 750,000 jobs and a 0.6 percent reduction in growth in 2013. While many agree we can find additional spending cuts in the long-term, such large cuts now—instead of phasing them in responsibly when the economy is stronger—amounts to fiscal malpractice.

Squeaky Wheel ''Fixes'' Exacerbate Long-Term Problems—Congress acted to prevent furloughs of food inspectors and air traffic controllers, and departments and agencies are using limited transfer and reprogramming authority to mitigate other immediate problems caused by cuts. These gimmicks merely kick the can down the road, sparing short-term pain through one-time savings that delay long-term needs like construction, maintenance, and training.

These expenses will have to be repaid in future years even as the sequester cuts deeper into the overall budgets for these agencies. While industries' bottom lines were protected from flight delays and fewer meat inspections, infrastructure at airports will suffer this year, increasing needs in the future, and this year's fixes do nothing to address the cuts required of these same programs in the coming years.

Responsible Fix is Needed—In just two short months of sequester cuts, the impacts are hurting our economy, increasing financial burdens on families, and forcing the federal government to make false choices between essential services. We simply cannot afford 10 years of job loss and stunted economic growth. Congress must replace these mindless cuts with a sensible and balanced plan to promote growth and reduce the long-term deficit and debt.

Mr. CULBERSON. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), the ranking member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and a valuable member of the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

Mr. FARR. Madam Chair, I thank Ranking Member BISHOP for that kind introduction. And, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your leadership on this committee. I have been on this committee since I've been on the Committee on Appropriations, and I'm really excited about the ability for us to respond to the quality of life for people in uniform and their families.

This is the committee that helps the families with housing, with health care, with child care, with the benefit packages that the military allows. It's very, very important because we also have the responsibility for the Department of Veterans Affairs. It's the only one-stop in an entire Congress, because the Senate has no comparable committee where both the responsibility of the Active Duty and the veterans are in one place. You know, in this country you can't be a veteran unless you've first been a member of the Department of Defense, so it's a continuum of care.

If you add up the budgets of both the Defense Department and veterans and our military construction, it's the largest of all the budgets that the appropriations does, so it is important that we pay a lot of attention to detail. We have a lot of issues dealing with not only Active Duty military and their living conditions, but also conditions, serious conditions with veterans and the backlog that veterans have.

I think we're on the road to solving that problem. California has the worst backlog in the office in Oakland, but the Secretary has been paying a lot of attention and putting a lot of technology into it. I want to commend the chair and the ranking member of this committee for the leadership they've provided in trying to solve it.

I also want to commend, I think the Department of Defense has the best capital outlay program. It's called the FYDP. It stands for fiscal year improvement plan or something like that. What it does, all of the services, whenever they need anything constructed, they have to go in and compete against each other, and so it's on merit. Then the project with the most merit moves to the top of the list. We have been able to take care of that in a very responsible way.

Mr. CULBERSON. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Chair, I yield 3 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for the purpose of a colloquy.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Chair, I thank Mr. BISHOP for his courtesy. I also would really like to thank you, Chairman CULBERSON, for your excellent work on this bill. This is a massive undertaking.

One aspect here that I want to focus on is the policies. The Pentagon has set its sight on good policies. Not only do our troops benefit, but so does the American public. Nothing demonstrates this more than the recent Defense Department's Unified Facilities Criteria, UFC 2–100–01. Behind this strange-sounding title is the Pentagon's installation master planning document for over 500 installations around the world, four times the amount of space of Walmarts. This document, updated for the very first time since 1986, has the potential to positively impact every military servicemember and their families by making our military bases more welcoming, more connected, and more livable.

However, the UFC is only guidance for each branch of the military. In order for it to have a positive and transformative impact, we will need to see strong implementation guidance from each service branch. I believe this is a priority for the Department of Defense. Delay and deviation would only serve to harm or set back our military families who deserve nothing but the best.

As such, I deeply appreciate the opportunity to work with the chairman and ranking member to include language urging the Department of Defense to provide an assessment of the progress and barriers to the implementation of UFC 2–100–01.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I am happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. The gentleman from Oregon raises a really important issue that the subcommittee will look into and will work to address in some way as we move through this process.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Terrific. Thank you very much.

□ 1540

If I have time remaining, I was curious if the chairman of the subcommittee feels comfortable with working with us to make some progress on this implementation.

Mr. CULBERSON. Of course we will do all we can to work together.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you. I really appreciate the opportunity to work with you on this and look forward to making this progress for our military families. Thank you very much.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Chair, we have no further speakers on this side.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, it's a pleasure to bring this bill to the House and to recommend it to every Member of the House to support this bipartisan bill to make sure that our men and women in uniform—as my good friend, SAM FARR, said, this is such a privilege to be on this committee, the only one in Congress that can ensure the quality of life and peace of mind of our men and women in uniform and our men and women who, once they've served our country, move into the VA system. And I would urge the adoption of the bill by the Members of the House.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. FRANKEL of Florida. Madam Chair, Jeff Calaicovo is a military veteran living with his loving wife in Ft. Lauderdale. He is an American hero who received two Purple Hearts for his courage and service during the Vietnam War. Jeff fought for, and suffered for this country, spending five months in a burn ward as a result of his exposure to Agent Orange.

Today, Jeff suffers from PTSD, loss of hearing and other medical complications that should be covered by his veterans' benefits. But our claims system failed him.

Jeff first initiated his claim in May 2011. Until his case was brought to my office's attention, he had made little progress towards receiving the benefits he deserves.

My staff worked with Jeff over many months so that he finally will begin receiving his benefits after waiting nearly two years.

Sadly, Jeff's story is not unique. The average wait time for claims processing is 292 days with some regional offices averaging 450 days.

Having just returned from visiting our service men and women in Afghanistan, and as the mother of a Marine veteran, I know firsthand the sacrifices our troops make for our freedoms. Our veterans have fought for this country and it is time we fight for them.

That is why I have joined my colleagues in enacting a number of measures that will help eliminate the veterans' claims backlog once and for all, in H.R. 2216, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act of 2014.

These measures include finally requiring the DOD and the VA to move towards one integrated electronic system, requiring more frequent reporting to Congress on the status of claims processing, and boosting VA funding to allow for 94 new claims processors to tackle head on the disability claims backlog.

I am confident these new measure will put us on the road towards eliminating an unacceptable problem that has neglected our America heroes.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Chair, I rise today to express my strong support for funding veterans' programs. However, I am very concerned that this bill is part of a Republican budget that would shortchange other critical priorities—like education, nutrition and housing assistance, healthcare and medical research.

I voted in favor of H.R. 2216, the Military Construction—VA Appropriations bill for FY 2014 because I believe it is critical that we keep our promises to our veterans. Today's legislation provides $157.8 billion for veterans' programs and military construction in FY 2014, including the over $73 billion in advance appropriations for veterans' health care approved in last year's appropriations measure. It also contains $55.6 billion in advance FY 2015 funding for VA medical programs.

Among other critical priorities, it provides over $290 million to help the VA eliminate the disability claims backlog by 2015, including funding for the VA's paperless process claims system. It provides $344 million for the Pentagon and the VA to implement a joint integrated electronic health records system. These funds are critical: the VA has nearly

900,100 Pending disability claims and, of those, 72 percent have been pending for over 125 days. That is unacceptable; the backlog is causing serious hardships for veterans and families throughout our country, and it is imperative that we work with the VA to ensure that the backlog is eliminated and all claims are processed in a fair and timely manner.

While I am proud to support critical funding for those who served our nation, I have serious concerns about the implications this bill carries for the rest of the appropriations process. The Republican Budget sets the lowest cap on discretionary spending in a decade. Non-defense discretionary spending would be reduced even below the levels required under the sequester. Because of those limits, the adequate funding of this bill will result in inadequate funding of other spending bills down the line. Those other bills fund national priorities including education, nutrition and housing assistance, and programs to spur job growth. We cannot afford to abandon those important initiatives.

The White House warned, in its veto threat for this legislation, that enacting this bill "while adhering to the overall spending limits in the House Budget's top line discretionary level for fiscal year (FY) 2014, would hurt our economy and require draconian cuts to middle-class priorities." I couldn't agree more. We need to set a realistic spending ceiling so that all of our national priorities receive adequate funding.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Pursuant to the rule, the bill shall be considered for amendment under the 5-minute rule.

During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chair may accord priority in recognition to a Member offering an amendment who has caused it to be printed in the designated place in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Those amendments will be considered read.

The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2216

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes, namely:

TITLE I

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Army as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Army Corps of Engineers and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, and for construction and operation of facilities in support of the functions of the Commander in Chief, $1,099,875,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed $64,575,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, architect and engineer services, and host nation support, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Army determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, naval installations, facilities, and real property for the Navy and Marine Corps as currently authorized by law, including personnel in the Naval Facilities Engineering Command and other personal services necessary for the purposes of this appropriation, $1,616,281,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed $89,830,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Navy determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, military installations, facilities, and real property for the Air Force as currently authorized by law, $1,127,273,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of this amount, not to exceed $11,314,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Air Force determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, DEFENSE-WIDE

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For acquisition, construction, installation, and equipment of temporary or permanent public works, installations, facilities, and real property for activities and agencies of the Department of Defense (other than the military departments), as currently authorized by law, $3,707,923,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That such amounts of this appropriation as may be determined by the Secretary of Defense may be transferred to such appropriations of the Department of Defense available for military construction or family housing as the Secretary may designate, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes, and for the same time period, as the appropriation or fund to which transferred: *Provided further*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $237,838,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Defense determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor: *Provided further*, That of the amount appropriated, notwithstanding any other provision of law, $38,513,000 shall be available for payments to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the planning, design, and construction of a new North Atlantic Treaty Organization headquarters.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BROUN OF GEORGIA

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 4, line 14, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by $38,513,000)"

Page 5, line 6, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by $38,513,000)".

Page 63, line 6, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by $38,513,000)".

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Madam Chairman, my amendment would zero out our contribution to the brand-new NATO headquarters in Brussels and transfer that amount, more than $38 million, to the spending reduction account to help us deal with our debt.

This line item within the bill is the very definition of ridiculous. The U.S. is furloughing civilian military personnel and sacrificing our own military readiness here at home, policies with which I disagree. And yet, here we are, sending millions of dollars overseas to build a lavish new headquarters for the international bureaucrats in NATO.

Madam Chairman, the planned NATO headquarters is an unfortunate example of excess and waste. While every NATO member-nation is cutting back on overall spending, the new headquarters remains on track as a monument to bureaucracy. In total, the building will cost well over $1 billion to build, and it's taken 13 years just to finalize the plans.

If we are serious about confronting our spending problem, we must fundamentally re-evaluate our priorities. We don't need to help NATO build a new headquarters. We need to ask what are we doing in NATO in the first place. The Cold War is over. It's time to stop policing Europe and start worrying about our deficit.

I encourage all Members to support this commonsense amendment to help us reduce our spending and to pay off our unsustainable debt.

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

Mr. CULBERSON. I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. I share my colleague from Georgia's passion and commitment to reduce the deficit to avoid passing on this debt to our children. This bill has bipartisan support. It has been put together very carefully to ensure that we're supporting our men and women in uniform, and I'm looking forward to finding ways to save money in other parts of the appropriations bill and in the parts of the budget that are actually, truly crushing our kids with debt and deficit.

It's the social safety net that has grown so tremendously that is causing the greatest burden on our kids, the Social Security and Medicare and Medicaid. The growth of these programs has been so astronomical it's swallowing up almost all of our national income on an annual basis. And that's where we need to focus our attention is saving those programs from bankruptcy. In fact, that's where we will really save the big money for our children in the future.

Medicare is in such dire straits that if you're 54 years of age or younger, the Medicare hospital fund can only pay about 50 cents on the dollar of the benefits that have been promised. So the

Medicare program, for all intents and purposes, for people that are 54 years of age or younger, is bankrupt.

And the Social Security program, if you're 47 years of age or younger, that program is bankrupt because it can only pay about 60 cents on the dollar.

So we've got to, as a Congress, in order to save our Nation from bankruptcy, to save our kids from crushing levels of taxation, to prevent this mountain of debt from being passed on to our children, save Medicare and Social Security from bankruptcy. And that's what Congressman RYAN, chairman of the Budget Committee is working on. Congressman SAM JOHNSON from the Ways and Means Committee is working on legislation to save Social Security, and that's where we're going to save the big money.

On things like NATO, we have over 600,000 troops in Europe. We have 127 military installations. I am no fan of the United Nations, but NATO has served a vital role since the end of World War II in preserving the peace in Europe. We've expanded NATO membership now to the former countries of Eastern Europe that were behind the Iron Curtain.

It was NATO and the leadership of President Ronald Reagan and the resolute courage of our men and women in uniform that led to the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Iron Curtain. But for NATO, but for that strategic alliance, we may still be facing Communist Russia. Today the Soviet Union is gone, the Iron Curtain is gone, and many of those nations that were once in the Soviet Bloc are members of NATO.

So with great respect for my colleague from Georgia and his conservative commitment to balance the budget, let us focus on saving Social Security and Medicare from bankruptcy, first and foremost, as the most effective, long-term way to save the Nation from bankruptcy and to get us back on track to a balanced budget.

Look for other opportunities to save money in our multiple appropriations bills that are coming up, but not at the expense of a great strategic alliance that has served this Nation well since the end of World War II.

I'd urge my colleagues to vote against this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I'd like to join my distinguished chair in opposition to this amendment.

I certainly appreciate and understand the gentleman from Georgia's commitment to reducing the deficit. The deficit is something that is undermining the economic foundation of this Nation. It is like a cancer that is eating away at us, and we have to do all that we can to reduce that deficit and get us on track to a balanced budget.

However, I suspect that this amendment, while well intentioned, may be penny-wise and pound-foolish because NATO, this account from which these funds will be taken, supports a strategic alliance that has helped to protect the American people.

Just over the last decade, NATO has been our strategic partner in the war against terrorism in Iraq and in Afghanistan and in our efforts to protect the American people and to protect us abroad.

□ 1550

We simply cannot afford to turn our backs on our allies who have stuck with us and who have supported us in our efforts to protect this world from the bad actors in the war against terrorism. And as a result of that, I reluctantly oppose the gentleman's amendment, while understanding and commending him for his commitment toward deficit reduction.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BROUN).

The question was taken; and the Chair announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Madam Chair, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia will be postponed.

The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Army National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by law, $315,815,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $24,005,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Director of the Army National Guard determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR NATIONAL GUARD

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air National Guard, and contributions therefor, as authorized by law, $107,800,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $13,400,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Director of the Air National Guard determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, ARMY RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Army Reserve as authorized by law, $174,060,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $14,212,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Chief of the Army Reserve determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, NAVY RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the reserve components of the Navy and Marine Corps as authorized by law, $32,976,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $2,540,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Secretary of Navy determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE RESERVE

For construction, acquisition, expansion, rehabilitation, and conversion of facilities for the training and administration of the Air Force Reserve as authorized by law, $45,659,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That of the amount appropriated, not to exceed $2,229,000 shall be available for study, planning, design, and architect and engineer services, as authorized by law, unless the Chief of the Air Force Reserve determines that additional obligations are necessary for such purposes and notifies the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the determination and the reasons therefor.

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION SECURITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

For the United States share of the cost of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program for the acquisition and construction of military facilities and installations (including international military headquarters) and for related expenses for the collective defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Area as authorized by section 2806 of title 10, United States Code, and Military Construction Authorization Acts, $199,700,000, to remain available until expended.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BROUN OF GEORGIA

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Madam Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 8, line 12, after the dollar amount, insert ''(reduced to $0)''.

Page 63, line 6, after the dollar amount, insert ''(increased by $199,700,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. My amendment would totally zero out the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Investment Program and transfer its nearly $200 million into the spending reduction account.

The world has changed dramatically since the creation of NATO. Its mission, as stated by the first Secretary General, Lord Ismay, is ''to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.'' I have a hard time seeing how this is relevant to our post-Soviet world and a post-Cold War world.

In this modern age and in this time of domestic fiscal emergency, it makes no sense for the United States to manage the defense of Europe through NATO. And it certainly makes no sense for us to pay such a large share of it. It's time for us to wind down our involvement with NATO instead of making up new justifications for this defense warfare.

Madam Chair, our Nation is broke. We have an unsustainable debt. We're spending money that's going to crush our children's future and make their future much dimmer than it is today. We have to reallocate our resources and put them towards what's going to deal with this unsustainable debt. We've got to stop this out-of-control spending. Both parties are guilty of doing so.

Though some would say nearly $200 million is just a paltry amount, when our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are not getting the finances that they need and when Americans are struggling just to make ends meet and we have an economy that is really hurting and jobs are not being created and students are not having jobs when they graduate from college, we have to deal with this debt that's unsustainable. This $200 million would be transferred into the spending reduction account and help us to start—just a small start—to stop this out-of-control spending. It's absolutely critical that we do so.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, I rise in opposition to the amendment and move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, I oppose this amendment because I share the gentleman's concern about the debt and the deficit. As I mentioned a moment ago, the way we're going to save the country from bankruptcy and protect our kids from this crushing debt burden that they're about to inherit to is rescue Social Security and Medicare from their certain bankruptcy, which is just around the corner. The Republican constitutional conservative majority of this House is working hard to develop legislation to save those two programs from bankruptcy. But this amendment would zero out the funding that the Congress has invested in the acquisition and construction of military facilities and installations for NATO.

NATO has been a vital part of our Nation's security since the end of World War II. We have over 600,000 men and women in uniform in Europe who depend on the resources that this Congress provides to them, in part, through the work of NATO. We have 127 military installations in Europe that depend, in part, on the work that is done through our contribution to NATO.

If the gentleman offers an amendment later on, for example, on the foreign operations part of the bill to cut funding for the United Nations, I look forward to supporting that because I have no particular love for the United Nations. They vote against us at every chance they get. We contribute the majority of money that the United Nations receives and they happily vote against us at every opportunity.

But when it comes to NATO, that's of strategic importance to the security of the United States. And while I share the gentleman's passion to cut the deficit and the debt, let's save it for cutting the United Nations and foreign aid, other than for Israel. I'm wearing proudly my pin of the two lone star States, the State of Texas and the State of Israel. Except for our funding for the great State of Israel, which we need to preserve and protect, I look forward to helping the gentleman cut foreign aid and cut funding for the United Nations, but not for NATO.

I urge the House to reject this amendment.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CULBERSON. I will happily yield to my friend from Georgia.

Mr. BROUN of Georgia. I appreciate the comments from my dear friend from Texas. He and I have been involved in trying to cut spending in many ways for a long period of time. In fact, I have a freestanding bill to zero out spending for the United Nations. I want to get the U.N. out of the U.S. and the U.S. out of the U.N. And so that's to come, I promise you. That will be coming. I'll give you that opportunity.

And you're exactly right, Social Security and Medicare need to be fixed so that our senior citizens and poor people have the proper help that they need. And I'm all for that, too. But we've got to cut where we can. I'm a marine. I was deployed to Afghanistan last year as a Navy reservist. And I believe in a strong military. I believe in peace through strength. And we've got to have the strongest military in the world. I don't believe our military should ever be in a fair fight. We need to be in a fight that's overwhelming.

But NATO is a relic of the Cold War. It's a relic that we need to look at. And when we have such a huge debt—almost $17 trillion—we need to cut wherever we can, whenever we can. I think it's extremely important for us to reorder our priorities, particularly across the world, and getting rid of this money for NATO is a way of doing that.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, reclaiming my time, the gentleman is correct that $200 million is a lot of money, but we have to preserve our investment in NATO. I would point out that the former Soviet Union is sending submarines into the Gulf of Mexico. The former Soviet Union, now Russia, is aggressively sending their strategic nuclear bombers pushing up against the outer limits of our airspace around Guam and around Alaska.

□ 1600

So the Russians are no longer overtly and openly Communist, but they are not necessarily our friends. They and the Communist Chinese are aggressively attacking the United States in the cyberworld. If a state of war could be declared in the cyberworld, a state of war already exists. The Communist Chinese have already attacked us and are at war with the United States over the Internet and over in Russia, as well. They are not our friends. And we, of course, are going to look for every opportunity to work together with them, but NATO is a vital part of America's strategic security.

I urge defeat of the gentleman's amendment and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Again, I certainly understand and commend the gentleman for his commitment and his passionate support for reduction of the debt and the deficit, and I think that we on this side of the aisle join him in that quest. However, again, I submit that this amendment is probably one that is penny-wise and pound-foolish. We have an alliance with the countries in NATO. Those countries have been our staunch supporters in Operation Iraqi Freedom, our efforts in Afghanistan; and, of course, each of those NATO countries has a developing presence of al Qaeda just as we in the United States. So it's very, very important that we maintain that strategic alliance.

This amendment would cut our share of the responsibility for NATO which we share with the other member countries. And I think that since we are deriving a mutual benefit that we should have a mutual responsibility to support, this joint support, and I think that it would not be wise for us to withdraw our aspect of that support. We should assume our responsibility with our allies for the mutual support and the mutual benefits.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BROUN).

The amendment was rejected.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, $44,008,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, ARMY

For expenses of family housing for the Army for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, $512,871,000.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, $73,407,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, NAVY AND MARINE CORPS

For expenses of family housing for the Navy and Marine Corps for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, $389,844,000.

FAMILY HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, AIR FORCE

For expenses of family housing for the Air Force for construction, including acquisition, replacement, addition, expansion, extension, and alteration, as authorized by law, $76,360,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, AIR FORCE

For expenses of family housing for the Air Force for operation and maintenance, including debt payment, leasing, minor construction, principal and interest charges, and insurance premiums, as authorized by law, $388,598,000.

FAMILY HOUSING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, DEFENSE-WIDE

For expenses of family housing for the activities and agencies of the Department of Defense (other than the military departments) for operation and maintenance, leasing, and minor construction, as authorized by law, $55,845,000.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FAMILY HOUSING IMPROVEMENT FUND

For the Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund, $1,780,000, to remain available until expended, for family housing initiatives undertaken pursuant to section 2883 of title 10, United States Code, providing alternative means of acquiring and improving military family housing and supporting facilities.

CHEMICAL DEMILITARIZATION CONSTRUCTION, DEFENSE-WIDE

For expenses of construction, not otherwise provided for, necessary for the destruction of the United States stockpile of lethal chemical agents and munitions in accordance with section 1412 of the Department of Defense Authorization Act, 1986 (50 U.S.C. 1521), and for the destruction of other chemical warfare materials that are not in the chemical weapon stockpile, as currently authorized by law, $122,536,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018, which shall be only for the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BASE CLOSURE ACCOUNT

For deposit into the Department of Defense Base Closure Account, established by section 2906(a) of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (10 U.S.C. 2687 note), as amended by section 2711 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112-239), $451,357,000, to remain available until expended.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

SEC. 101. None of the funds made available in this title shall be expended for payments under a cost-plus-a-fixed-fee contract for construction, where cost estimates exceed $25,000, to be performed within the United States, except Alaska, without the specific approval in writing of the Secretary of Defense setting forth the reasons therefor.

SEC. 102. Funds made available in this title for construction shall be available for hire of passenger motor vehicles.

SEC. 103. Funds made available in this title for construction may be used for advances to the Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, for the construction of access roads as authorized by section 210 of title 23, United States Code, when projects authorized therein are certified as important to the national defense by the Secretary of Defense.

SEC. 104. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to begin construction of new bases in the United States for which specific appropriations have not been made.

SEC. 105. None of the funds made available in this title shall be used for purchase of land or land easements in excess of 100 percent of the value as determined by the Army Corps of Engineers or the Naval Facilities Engineering Command, except: (1) where there is a determination of value by a Federal court; (2) purchases negotiated by the Attorney General or the designee of the Attorney General; (3) where the estimated value is less than $25,000; or (4) as otherwise determined by the Secretary of Defense to be in the public interest.

SEC. 106. None of the funds made available in this title shall be used to: (1) acquire land; (2) provide for site preparation; or (3) install utilities for any family housing, except housing for which funds have been made available in annual Acts making appropriations for military construction.

SEC. 107. None of the funds made available in this title for minor construction may be used to transfer or relocate any activity from one base or installation to another, without prior notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 108. None of the funds made available in this title may be used for the procurement of steel for any construction project or activity for which American steel producers, fabricators, and manufacturers have been denied the opportunity to compete for such steel procurement.

SEC. 109. None of the funds available to the Department of Defense for military construction or family housing during the current fiscal year may be used to pay real property taxes in any foreign nation.

SEC. 110. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to initiate a new installation overseas without prior notification to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

SEC. 111. None of the funds made available in this title may be obligated for architect and engineer contracts estimated by the Government to exceed $500,000 for projects to be accomplished in Japan, in any North Atlantic Treaty Organization member country, or in countries bordering the Arabian Sea, unless such contracts are awarded to United States firms or United States firms in joint venture with host nation firms.

SEC. 112. None of the funds made available in this title for military construction in the United States territories and possessions in the Pacific and on Kwajalein Atoll, or in countries within the United States Central Command Area of Responsibility, may be used to award any contract estimated by the Government to exceed $1,000,000 to a foreign contractor: *Provided*, That this section shall not be applicable to contract awards for which the lowest responsive and responsible bid of a United States contractor exceeds the lowest responsive and responsible bid of a foreign contractor by greater than 20 percent: *Provided further*, That this section shall not apply to contract awards for military construction on Kwajalein Atoll for which the lowest responsive and responsible bid is submitted by a Marshallese contractor.

SEC. 113. The Secretary of Defense shall inform the appropriate committees of both Houses of Congress, including the Committees on Appropriations, of plans and scope of any proposed military exercise involving United States personnel 30 days prior to its occurring, if amounts expended for construction, either temporary or permanent, are anticipated to exceed $100,000.

SEC. 114. Funds appropriated to the Department of Defense for construction in prior years shall be available for construction authorized for each such military department by the authorizations enacted into law during the current session of Congress.

SEC. 115. For military construction or family housing projects that are being completed with funds otherwise expired or lapsed for obligation, expired or lapsed funds may be used to pay the cost of associated supervision, inspection, overhead, engineering and design on those projects and on subsequent claims, if any.

SEC. 116. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any funds made available to a military department or defense agency for the construction of military projects may be obligated for a military construction project or contract, or for any portion of such a project or contract, at any time before the end of the fourth fiscal year after the fiscal year for which funds for such project were made available, if the funds obligated for such project: (1) are obligated from funds available for military construction projects; and (2) do not exceed the amount appropriated for such project, plus any amount by which the cost of such project is increased pursuant to law.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 117. In addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense, proceeds deposited to the Department of Defense Base Closure Account established by section 207(a)(1) of the Defense Authorization Amendments and Base Closure and Realignment Act (10 U.S.C. 2687 note) pursuant to section 207(a)(2)(C) of such Act, may be transferred to the account established by section 2906(a)(1) of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (10 U.S.C. 2687 note), to be merged with, and to be available for the same purposes and the same time period as that account.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 118. Subject to 30 days prior notification, or 14 days for a notification provided in an electronic medium pursuant to sections 480 and 2883 of title 10, United States Code, to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress, such additional amounts as may be determined by the Secretary of Defense may be transferred to: (1) the Department of Defense Family Housing Improvement Fund from amounts appropriated for construction in ''Family Housing'' accounts, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes and for the same period of time as amounts appropriated directly to the Fund; or (2) the Department of Defense Military Unaccompanied Housing Improvement Fund from amounts appropriated for construction of military unaccompanied housing in ''Military Construction'' accounts, to be merged with and to be available for the same purposes and for the same period of time as amounts appropriated directly to the Fund: *Provided*, That appropriations made available to the Funds shall be available to cover the costs, as defined in section 502(5) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, of direct loans or loan guarantees issued by the Department of Defense pursuant to the provisions of subchapter IV of chapter 169 of title 10, United States Code,

pertaining to alternative means of acquiring and improving military family housing, military unaccompanied housing, and supporting facilities.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 119. In addition to any other transfer authority available to the Department of Defense, amounts may be transferred from the accounts established by sections 2906(a)(1) and 2906A(a)(1) of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (10 U.S.C. 2687 note), to the fund established by section 1013(d) of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3374) to pay for expenses associated with the Homeowners Assistance Program incurred under 42 U.S.C. 3374(a)(1)(A). Any amounts transferred shall be merged with and be available for the same purposes and for the same time period as the fund to which transferred.

SEC. 120. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, funds made available in this title for operation and maintenance of family housing shall be the exclusive source of funds for repair and maintenance of all family housing units, including general or flag officer quarters: *Provided*, That not more than $35,000 per unit may be spent annually for the maintenance and repair of any general or flag officer quarters without 30 days prior notification, or 14 days for a notification provided in an electronic medium pursuant to sections 480 and 2883 of title 10, United States Code, to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress, except that an after-the-fact notification shall be submitted if the limitation is exceeded solely due to costs associated with environmental remediation that could not be reasonably anticipated at the time of the budget submission: *Provided further*, That the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) is to report annually to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress all operation and maintenance expenditures for each individual general or flag officer quarters for the prior fiscal year.

AMENDMENT NO. 1 OFFERED BY MR. GRIFFITH OF VIRGINIA

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 18, line 8, strike ''$35,000 per unit'' and insert ''$15,000 per unit''.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia. Madam Chair, this is a simple little amendment. Currently, any expenditures for flag officers' general housing on base has to be reported if there is an expenditure in excess of $35,000. This lowers this number down to $15,000. It doesn't mean they can't do the work. It just means that if they're going to spend more than $15,000, they have to file a report with Congress before they do so.

In this day and age where we're trying to make sure that we're spending the taxpayers' money wisely, this seems to be appropriate. My wife and I put a roof on our house a couple of years ago for about $15,000. If they need more than that, that's fine, but make a report to Congress. If there's something terribly wrong with the flooring and it costs more than $15,000, they can report it. But most repairs to a home can be done under $15,000.

This is just simply saying, hey, tell us what you're doing so that we can have a more transparent expenditure and a more transparent government.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. I rise in support of the gentleman's amendment.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. We'd be happy to accept it. I think it's more than reasonable to report that you're going to expend more than $15,000. Certainly, we want to help make sure that our officers have everything that they need, but it would be nice to have them report it. And I would be willing to accept the gentleman's amendment if my colleague from Georgia is in agreement.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GRIFFITH).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. FATTAH. Madam Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FATTAH. I just wanted to come to the floor. I have had the opportunity to serve on this subcommittee under the leadership of my great friend from Texas and our ranking member, Congressman BISHOP from Georgia.

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The focus of the work is in a bipartisan process to come up with the best possible set of proposals to move our country forward to respond to our needs in terms of military construction.

I rise today, in particular, to thank the two leaders of the subcommittee, and in particular, the chairman for his great leadership on veterans benefits. I had breakfast with General Shinseki, and the staff of the VA I think has been clearly moved by the ranking member and the chairman's insistence that we deal with the challenges around the backlog.

I want to particularly note the great work in this bill on neuroscience and brain disorders. The chairman and I began some work together in the CJS appropriations process a year and a half ago, which has moved our country, I think, forward in terms of dealing with some 600 different brain diseases and disorders in a much more aggressive fashion, and we compliment the President on the brain initiative. Right here in this VA bill there are actual concrete steps being taken to deal with posttraumatic stress, to deal with traumatic brain injury. And I had a Nobel Prize laureate, who has done work on TV, really come just to say that the focus we put on this has been so important because some 40 percent of our injured veterans have some type of traumatic brain injury or posttraumatic stress challenges that they face. I visited the Intrepid Center.

So I didn't want this moment to pass without thanking the two leaders of the subcommittee for their work. I could go on and on about the Epilepsy Centers of Excellence, but I know I only have a few minutes, so I'll cease here. I want to thank them, because it won't necessarily be recorded. But in the lives of tens of thousands of our veterans and servicemen, differences in their life circumstances will be made for the positive because of what's in this bill. So thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

SEC. 121. Amounts contained in the Ford Island Improvement Account established by subsection (h) of section 2814 of title 10, United States Code, are appropriated and shall be available until expended for the purposes specified in subsection (i)(1) of such section or until transferred pursuant to subsection (i)(3) of such section.

SEC. 122. None of the funds made available in this title, or in any Act making appropriations for military construction which remain available for obligation, may be obligated or expended to carry out a military construction, land acquisition, or family housing project at or for a military installation approved for closure, or at a military installation for the purposes of supporting a function that has been approved for realignment to another installation, in 2005 under the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (part A of title XXIX of Public Law 101–510; 10 U.S.C. 2687 note), unless such a project at a military installation approved for realignment will support a continuing mission or function at that installation or a new mission or function that is planned for that installation, or unless the Secretary of Defense certifies that the cost to the United States of carrying out such project would be less than the cost to the United States of cancelling such project, or if the project is at an active component base that shall be established as an enclave or in the case of projects having multi-agency use, that another Government agency has indicated it will assume ownership of the completed project. The Secretary of Defense may not transfer funds made available as a result of this limitation from any military construction project, land acquisition, or family housing project to another account or use such funds for another purpose or project without the prior approval of the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress. This section shall not apply to military construction projects, land acquisition, or family housing projects for which the project is vital to the national security or the protection of health, safety, or environmental quality: *Provided*, That the Secretary of Defense shall notify the congressional defense committees within seven days of a decision to carry out such a military construction project.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 123. During the 5-year period after appropriations available in this Act to the Department of Defense for military construction and family housing operation and maintenance and construction have expired for obligation, upon a determination that such appropriations will not be necessary for the liquidation of obligations or for making authorized adjustments to such appropriations for obligations incurred during the period of availability of such appropriations, unobligated balances of such appropriations may be transferred into the appropriation ''Foreign Currency Fluctuations, Construction, Defense'', to be merged with and to be available for the same time period and for the same purposes as the appropriation to which transferred.

SEC. 124. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for any action that relates to or promotes the expansion of the boundaries or size of the Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site, Colorado.

SEC. 125. (a) Except as provided in subsection (b), none of the funds made available in this Act may be used by the Secretary of the Army to relocate a unit in the Army that—

(1) performs a testing mission or function that is not performed by any other unit in the Army and is specifically stipulated in title 10, United States Code; and

(2) is located at a military installation at which the total number of civilian employees of the Department of the Army and Army contractor personnel employed exceeds 10 percent of the total number of members of the regular and reserve components of the Army assigned to the installation.

(b) EXCEPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply if the Secretary of the Army certifies to the congressional defense committees that in proposing the relocation of the unit of the Army, the Secretary complied with Army Regulation 5–10 relating to the policy, procedures, and responsibilities for Army stationing actions.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 126. Of the unobligated balances available for ''Military Construction, Army'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $89,000,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 127. Of the unobligated balances available for ''Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $49,920,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 128. Of the unobligated balances available for ''Military Construction, Defense-Wide'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $358,400,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 129. Of the unobligated balances available for ''Military Construction, Army'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $50,000,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 130. Of the unobligated balances available for ''Military Construction, Defense-Wide'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $16,470,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 131. Of the unobligated balances available for ''Military Construction, Air National Guard'', from prior appropriations Acts (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $45,623,000 are hereby rescinded.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 132. Of the unobligated balances made available in prior appropriation Acts for the fund established in section 1013(d) of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 3374) (other than appropriations designated by law as being for contingency operations directly related to the global war on terrorism or as an emergency requirement), $50,000,000 are hereby rescinded.

SEC. 133. Discretionary appropriations in this title are hereby reduced by $4,668,000.

SEC. 134. Notwithstanding section 116, the Secretary of Army may obligate from any available military construction funds such additional funds that the Secretary determines are necessary to complete the Explosive Research and Development Loading Facility, Picatinny Arsenal, New Jersey.

SEC. 135. For an additional amount for ''Military Construction, Navy and Marine Corps'', $75,000,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, such funds may be obligated and expended to carry out planning and design and construction of projects that (1) are of critical importance to the Armed Forces, (2) will be conducted within the 50 States, and (3) were contained in the fiscal year 2014 portion of the future-years defense program submitted to Congress under section 221 of title 10, United States Code, for fiscal years 2013 through 2017 and are also contained in the fiscal year 2015 portion of the future-years defense program submitted under such section for fiscal years 2014 through 2018: *Provided further*, That not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress an expenditure plan for funds provided under this heading.

TITLE II

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

COMPENSATION AND PENSIONS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For the payment of compensation benefits to or on behalf of veterans and a pilot program for disability examinations as authorized by section 107 and chapters 11, 13, 18, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code; pension benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 15, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code; and burial benefits, the Reinstated Entitlement Program for Survivors, emergency and other officers' retirement pay, adjusted-service credits and certificates, payment of premiums due on commercial life insurance policies guaranteed under the provisions of title IV of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 541 et seq.) and for other benefits as authorized by sections 107, 1312, 1977, and 2106, and chapters 23, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code, $71,248,171,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That not to exceed $9,232,000 of the amount appropriated under this heading shall be reimbursed to ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration'' and ''Information Technology Systems'' for necessary expenses in implementing the provisions of chapters 51, 53, and 55 of title 38, United States Code, the funding source for which is specifically provided as the ''Compensation and Pensions'' appropriation: *Provided further*, That such sums as may be earned on an actual qualifying patient basis, shall be reimbursed to ''Medical Care Collections Fund'' to augment the funding of individual medical facilities for nursing home care provided to pensioners as authorized.

READJUSTMENT BENEFITS

For the payment of readjustment and rehabilitation benefits to or on behalf of veterans as authorized by chapters 21, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 41, 51, 53, 55, and 61 of title 38, United States Code, and for the payment of benefits under the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, $13,135,898,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That expenses for rehabilitation program services and assistance which the Secretary is authorized to provide under subsection (a) of section 3104 of title 38, United States Code, other than under paragraphs (1), (2), (5), and (11) of that subsection, shall be charged to this account.

VETERANS INSURANCE AND INDEMNITIES

For military and naval insurance, national service life insurance, servicemen's indemnities, service-disabled veterans insurance, and veterans mortgage life insurance as authorized by chapters 19 and 21, title 38, United States Code, $77,567,000, to remain available until expended.

VETERANS HOUSING BENEFIT PROGRAM FUND

For the cost of direct and guaranteed loans, such sums as may be necessary to carry out the program, as authorized by subchapters I through III of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code: *Provided*, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974: *Provided further*, That during fiscal year 2014, within the resources available, not to exceed $500,000 in gross obligations for direct loans are authorized for specially adapted housing loans.

In addition, for administrative expenses to carry out the direct and guaranteed loan programs, $158,430,000.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION LOANS PROGRAM ACCOUNT

For the cost of direct loans, $5,000, as authorized by chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code: *Provided*, That such costs, including the cost of modifying such loans, shall be as defined in section 502 of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading are available to subsidize gross obligations for the principal amount of direct loans not to exceed $2,500,000.

In addition, for administrative expenses necessary to carry out the direct loan program, $354,000, which may be paid to the appropriation for ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration''.

NATIVE AMERICAN VETERAN HOUSING LOAN PROGRAM ACCOUNT

For administrative expenses to carry out the direct loan program authorized by subchapter V of chapter 37 of title 38, United States Code, $1,109,000.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Oregon is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

As our veterans return home from Iraq and Afghanistan after 10 years of conflict, it's critical that they're able to get the care they need and deserve. Part of that care must be greater access to complementary and alternative medicine. Unfortunately, based on conversations I've had with veterans back in my district and with practitioners of alternative medicine, and letters I've received, it's too often difficult for the veterans to utilize complementary and alternative medicine through the VA system, even though research is showing that a holistic approach to treatment, including complementary and alternative medicine, can make a significant impact. A recent survey conducted by the Samueli Institute, which

shared its findings at a Senate Veterans' Affairs hearing 2 weeks ago, demonstrated how the effectiveness of drugless self-care and integrative practices for treatment of these conditions had immediate and long-lasting impacts.

Many VA practitioners have taken note and are doing their best to integrate these practices. Many veterans are seeking out these services. Both, sadly, are encountering institutional barriers and limited availability.

Given the steadfast commitment of this committee to do all it can to increase the quality of care for our veterans, I would sincerely request the chairman and ranking member to address this issue as the bill proceeds through the process.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. The gentleman from Oregon, again, raises a very important issue that the subcommittee will look into, and we will do our best to address in some way as we move forward through this process.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you.

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I would be happy to yield to the gentleman.

Mr. CULBERSON. I agree with my colleague from Georgia, and we look forward to working closely with you to be sure that we continue to address these vital issues.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the hard work of the committee and the willingness to work with us, to be able to make sure our veterans have access to these services, and look forward to working with you to make it happen.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

MEDICAL SERVICES

For necessary expenses for furnishing, as authorized by law, inpatient and outpatient care and treatment to beneficiaries of the Department of Veterans Affairs and veterans described in section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code, including care and treatment in facilities not under the jurisdiction of the Department, and including medical supplies and equipment, bioengineering services, food services, and salaries and expenses of health care employees hired under title 38, United States Code, aid to State homes as authorized by section 1741 of title 38, United States Code, assistance and support services for caregivers as authorized by section 1720G of title 38, United States Code, loan repayments authorized by section 604 of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 124 Stat. 1174; 38 U.S.C. 7681 note), and hospital care and medical services authorized by section 1787 of title 38, United States Code, $45,015,527,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2014, and shall remain available until September 30, 2015: *Provided*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a priority for the provision of medical treatment for veterans who have service-connected disabilities, lower income, or have special needs: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall give priority funding for the provision of basic medical benefits to veterans in enrollment priority groups 1 through 6: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may authorize the dispensing of prescription drugs from Veterans Health Administration facilities to enrolled veterans with privately written prescriptions based on requirements established by the Secretary: *Provided further*, That the implementation of the program described in the previous proviso shall incur no additional cost to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

MEDICAL SUPPORT AND COMPLIANCE

For necessary expenses in the administration of the medical, hospital, nursing home, domiciliary, construction, supply, and research activities, as authorized by law; administrative expenses in support of capital policy activities; and administrative and legal expenses of the Department for collecting and recovering amounts owed the Department as authorized under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, and the Federal Medical Care Recovery Act (42 U.S.C. 2651 et seq.), $5,879,700,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2014, and shall remain available until September 30, 2015.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

For necessary expenses for the maintenance and operation of hospitals, nursing homes, domiciliary facilities, and other necessary facilities of the Veterans Health Administration; for administrative expenses in support of planning, design, project management, real property acquisition and disposition, construction, and renovation of any facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department; for oversight, engineering, and architectural activities not charged to project costs; for repairing, altering, improving, or providing facilities in the several hospitals and homes under the jurisdiction of the Department, not otherwise provided for, either by contract or by the hire of temporary employees and purchase of materials; for leases of facilities; and for laundry services, $4,739,000,000, plus reimbursements, shall become available on October 1, 2014, and shall remain available until September 30, 2015.

MEDICAL AND PROSTHETIC RESEARCH

For necessary expenses in carrying out programs of medical and prosthetic research and development as authorized by chapter 73 of title 38, United States Code, $585,664,000, plus reimbursements, shall remain available until September 30, 2015.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BLUMENAUER

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 31, line 18, after the dollar amount insert the following: ''(reduced by $35,000,000) (increased by $35,000,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Oregon is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I do appreciate the courtesy that the chair and ranking member have evidenced. I appreciate the fact that the gentleman from Texas—we've worked not only on these issues, but he's played a critical role on another issue near and dear to my heart dealing with international water, and it's a pleasure to work again.

Those efforts have saved countless lives abroad, and today, with this amendment, it's my hope that we can partner to improve and hopefully save lives right here at home.

I helped organize, found and chair the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus. It's clear from our work that we find America standing on the precipice of discovery in neuroscience research that will lead to a higher quality of life for the 50 million Americans affected by neurological illnesses every year.

□ 1620

Conditions in neuroscience have already dwarfed other areas of health care expenditures, and that's before the waves of baby boomers turning 65 at a rate of 10,000 per day for another 14 years are going to drive it even further. There are more people with brain disorders than all cancers and heart problems combined; and as society ages, this number will increase exponentially as will the cost to the health care system and the economy.

But the importance of neuroscience isn't just about the numbers. It's about improving the quality of life for those affected by neurological trauma, and no one is more deserving of these breakthroughs than the returning servicemembers affected by traumatic brain injuries or posttraumatic stress disorder.

As stated by General Peter Chiarelli, now the CEO of One Mind for Research and the 32nd chief of staff of the Army, TBI and PTSD have accounted for 36 percent of the disabling injuries suffered by soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is convinced, as I think most of us in Congress are, that we must do all we can to help our veterans because these invisible wounds have devastating and long-lasting impacts.

The amendment before the committee is identical to the one that I and Congresswoman MCMORRIS RODGERS, who is my cochair of the Neuroscience Caucus, offered and had adopted in last year's MilCon-VA appropriations bill.

The amendment aims to ensure that the Veterans Administration continues to have the resources it needs to find innovative new medicines and enhanced diagnostics for what can truly be termed an ''epidemic.'' The amendment does not increase or decrease any accounts in the appropriations bill. It simply requires that no less than $35 million of the Medical and Prosthetic Research account goes towards posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury so that we can expedite the cure for Active Duty personnel and veterans suffering from the effects of brain and psychological trauma incurred during their service.

The amendment, I hope, symbolizes a commitment from this Congress that, even in the midst of sequestration and tight budgets, we will not yield on this critical issue and area of funding.

In meeting with neuroscientists, I am always amazed to hear how this one

area of research often leads to positive, but unexpected, breakthroughs. For example, in researching depression, scientists found out that Prozac can help stroke victims recover motor skills more quickly.

The account, the Military and Prosthetic Research, funds many critical areas of research with direct and indirect links to PTSD, and this complementary amendment ensures that these links are made and that research is shared to everyone's benefit. It's a commitment to using resources in a way that allows one scientific inquiry to seek out other areas of impact that will lead to breakthroughs in TBI and PTSD. These items demand our special attention because their effects can so easily harm a soldier's family and loved ones if not properly diagnosed. Early detection and prevention prevents chaos, hardship and, indeed, in some cases, a further loss of life.

We must remember our duty to the wounded warriors who face a long journey to recovery. These harms may not be as visible as a missing limb, but can be even more damaging to a veteran's future. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment—a commitment from Congress to our servicemembers. We will continue to do all we can in developing new medicines and technology to improve the lives for those in need. I appreciate the extraordinary courtesy of the subcommittee, and respectfully urge adoption of the amendment.

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON).

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, I have no objection to the amendment.

I want to acknowledge and thank the gentleman from Oregon for his long labors and support of this important work to identify and cure these invisible injuries that many of our soldiers have suffered as a result of concussion, as a result of the circumstances of battle in which they find themselves.

We appreciate your good work, sir, and I will continue to work with you. I thank you for the amendment. I have no objection.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. The gentleman's amendment would require that no less than $35 million goes towards traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress disorder research from the Medical and Prosthetic Research account. I want to bring to the attention of this House that $32 million was already included for this purpose.

I do have some concerns regarding the amendment. I understand what the gentleman is trying to do, and I agree that PTSD and traumatic brain injury are the two major problems that the VA needs to focus on. Tens of thousands of veterans have suffered traumatic brain injury. Most are mild concussions that get better within a few months, but serious ones and multiple concussions can raise the risk of dementia and other problems. The gentleman points that out rightly.

With the tight budgets that we are facing, I am concerned, however, where the reduction would come from. For example, this account also provides for the research for prosthetics, for women's health, and for gulf war veterans illness. So I just want to make sure that the gentleman is aware that his amendment could cause shortfalls in other areas of research that are vital to the health care needs of our veterans.

I do assure the gentleman that the subcommittee and the committee will work hard to try to make sure that traumatic brain injury and PTSD are adequately addressed with our resources available for funding research there.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

The amendment was agreed to.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION

For necessary expenses of the National Cemetery Administration for operations and maintenance, not otherwise provided for, including uniforms or allowances therefor; cemeterial expenses as authorized by law; purchase of one passenger motor vehicle for use in cemeterial operations; hire of passenger motor vehicles; and repair, alteration or improvement of facilities under the jurisdiction of the National Cemetery Administration, $250,000,000, of which not to exceed $25,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2015.

DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary operating expenses of the Department of Veterans Affairs, not otherwise provided for, including administrative expenses in support of Department-Wide capital planning, management and policy activities, uniforms, or allowances therefor; not to exceed $25,000 for official reception and representation expenses; hire of passenger motor vehicles; and reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services, $403,023,000, of which not to exceed $20,151,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2015: *Provided*, That funds provided under this heading may be transferred to ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration''.

GENERAL OPERATING EXPENSES, VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

For necessary operating expenses of the Veterans Benefits Administration, not otherwise provided for, including hire of passenger motor vehicles, reimbursement of the General Services Administration for security guard services, and reimbursement of the Department of Defense for the cost of overseas employee mail, $2,455,490,000: *Provided*, That expenses for services and assistance authorized under paragraphs (1), (2), (5), and (11) of section 3104(a) of title 38, United States Code, that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines are necessary to enable entitled veterans: (1) to the maximum extent feasible, to become employable and to obtain and maintain suitable employment; or (2) to achieve maximum independence in daily living, shall be charged to this account: *Provided further*, That of the funds made available under this heading, not to exceed $123,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2015.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GALLEGO

Mr. GALLEGO. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Page 33, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert ''(reduced by $5,000,000) (increased by $5,000,000)''.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GALLEGO. Madam Chair, I would like to thank my long-time friend, even from the Texas Legislature, Representative CULBERSON, the chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, as well as Representative BISHOP, the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee, for their work on these important issues.

I rise today to offer an amendment to H.R. 2216, the appropriations bill for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The amendment is for the brave men and women who have served our country—our veterans.

It's simple. It's common sense. It highlights job training for veterans, helping them to find employment. Within the general operating expenses for the Veterans Benefits Administration account, this would support funding for veterans to become employable and maintain their jobs to meet the workforce needs of the 21st century.

Over the next 4 years, 1 million veterans are expected to transition into the workforce from the armed services. This makes this specific account vital to the lifeblood of decreasing our unemployment rate for veterans once they return home. 1.6 million veterans call Texas home, and 64,000 of these men and women reside in the 23rd Congressional District. These men and women have obtained tremendous skill sets while serving our country, and yet many have difficulty finding employment after they've completed their service. Nearly 700,000 veterans are unemployed. The jobless rate among our veterans is at 6.2 percent. Among veterans who served after 9/11, that rate increases to 7.5 percent.

These men and women have served this country, and they have put their lives on the line. It is our turn to serve them. Let's make certain that Congress focuses on training our veterans to meet the workforce needs of the 21st century. We should make the transition from military service to the workforce as seamless as possible. Lastly, this amendment doesn't present any budgetary issues, and the Congressional Budget Office confirms that the amendment doesn't score. Additionally, it doesn't have a net change in funding levels.

I encourage my colleagues to stand up for veterans' employment and to support my commonsense amendment. I look forward to working with all of you to get veterans back to work.

□ 1630

Mr. CULBERSON. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GALLEGO. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I have no objection to the amendment. The gentleman is absolutely right. We're all committed to making sure that when our veterans return home, they are fully employed and well taken care of.

I thank my friend from the Texas Legislature, Mr. GALLEGO, for offering his amendment, and we have no objection.

Mr. GALLEGO. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR (Mr. POE of Texas). The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I rise in support of the gentleman's amendment.

Mr. Chairman, after returning home from the war, veterans are now fighting for jobs back home. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, last year's unemployment rate for veterans was 12.1 percent, a significantly higher figure than the 8.7 percent unemployment rate for nonveterans. Even more staggering is that 19.1 percent of young veterans between the ages of 20 and 24 are unemployed.

All veterans, because of their service, have basic skills, and the only thing that they're missing is formal job training to match their abilities with the specific needs of an employer. This is another issue on Secretary Shinseki's plate. I believe that anything that we can do to help veterans gain employment we should do.

I thank the gentleman for raising this issue, and I support the amendment and yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GALLEGO).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SWALWELL of California. Mr. Chairman, the sacrifices of the few, our military veterans, provide the freedom for the many.

We know that it is our military veterans, who only make up just 1 percent of our population, that provide 100 percent of our freedom. But far too many of our veterans seeking the disability assistance that they rightly earned are running into a severe backlog at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Nationwide, there are close to 800,000 pending disability claims at the VA, and almost 550,000 of these claims have been pending for over 125 days. At the Oakland VA in Oakland, California, which serves the 15th Congressional District, which I represent, the constituents in my district have been waiting, on average, a staggering 552 days. Over 81 percent of the constituents have been waiting over 125 days. This is the longest average wait time across the United States. These numbers are a national disgrace, and I'm ashamed that the veterans who have served our country and have fought so hard have to wait so long.

Our military spends $1.8 billion a year recruiting young Americans to join our military. We spend it on NASCAR, Super Bowl ads, and we send our recruiters out to our schools to have our young men and women join in the honorable profession of defending our country, but we are neglecting the needs of the veterans. We're failing to keep the promises we make after they serve.

This weekend I had the opportunity to go to a Salute to New Recruits who are going into the military. I looked at those young, bright faces of young men and women who are going to go off to serve their country, and I told them, You are doing something that is very brave and very noble, but I hope that your families and you stand up for the benefits that you are rightfully earning.

Right now what we're seeing at the VA is shameful, Mr. Chairman. It's shameful that we would treat our veterans like this and not give them the benefits that they've earned. We're failing to live up to that solemn pledge that we've made to our Nation's wounded warriors. That's why this bill is so important. It reaffirms our commitment to caring for the men and women who made sacrifices to serve in uniform.

It contains commonsense solutions to eliminate the disability claims backlog by mandating that the VA modernize the disability claims process, and it also ensures greater efficiency and accountability on the part of the VA.

It would fully fund the President's requested budget to allow for an increase of the staff levels at the Veterans Benefits Administration. These funds would support an additional 94 claims processors, all of whom will work solely on disability claims, helping to address the heart of the backlog.

Increasing staff levels, as we know, however, is not a silver bullet. Creating a more efficient and responsive VA is also necessary if the disability claims process is going to be fixed. Today, the VA spends, on average, 175 days waiting for the Department of Defense to send them a veteran's record, mostly because these records are still kept in the form of paper files. It's time we bring this process into the 21st century.

In addition to moving away from paper files, it's clear that it would be far better for servicemembers and veterans, as well as taxpayers, for the DOD and the VA to maintain one integrated system for electronic health records. This bill seeks to move the DOD away from paper and towards an integrated system that can be used both for DOD and the VA. It also fully funds the Veterans Claims Intake Program, which is working to convert all those paper records the VA receives into digital files.

Mr. Chairman, the constituents of the 15th Congressional District who served so honorably should not have to wait 552 days for their disability compensation cases to be processed.

Those parts of the bill that I outlined will help to improve veterans' access to the benefits that they have earned and enable us to better live up to President Lincoln's promise in his second inaugural address:

> To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.

President Lincoln's words happen to be at the core of the VA's mission statement. Words, however, are not enough. Congress must act swiftly to fix the VA backlog with practical solutions and fulfill our pledge to veterans. We must leave no veteran behind when they come back. We must make sure that when we say ''thank you for your service'' to a veteran, that we mean it and we follow up with a meaningful and responsive claims process. The funding in this bill helps move us in that direction.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY AMODEI

Mr. AMODEI. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

> Page 33, line 5, after the dollar amount insert the following: ''(reduced by $44,000,000)(increased by $44,000,000)''.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Nevada is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AMODEI. Mr. Chairman, first of all, I would like to thank Chairman CULBERSON and Ranking Member BISHOP for their effort on bringing forth a good bill that addresses the needs of our veterans and maintains our commitment to providing them with the benefits that they earned and deserve.

I rise with this amendment for the first time since I've been in this body because of the existing claims backlog, which is over 600,000 claims nationwide.

As a member of the primary committee of jurisdiction and the primary subcommittee of jurisdiction on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I can tell you that, in dealing with this number of claims, we are not making mission in the Department of Veterans Affairs. I can also tell you that the proposal to spend $44 million, according to the Veterans Affairs testimony in front of our committees, to clear 50,000 of

those claims in the backlog is, quite simply, more of the same. That's about $900 a claim and will leave you with 550,000 claims when it's done this year.

I appreciate the opportunity of coming technology, but I can tell you this: if you represent a district that's in California, New York, Arizona, Indiana, Virginia, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Texas, Ohio, Maryland, another Texas hit, Boston or Mississippi, which is the majority of Members in this House, then guess what; you've got a majority of those claims in your district offices.

I say it's time for this House to take action and say this: don't cut a single regional office's budget. This amendment does not attempt to do that. This amendment says take that $44 million and allocate it for personnel in those 15 offices that all have over a year of processing time.

By the way, while we're mentioning that, I want to give you a quote that is from Under Secretary Hickey that basically says:

> Quite frankly, we have a resource allocation model that doesn't make any sense.

That's before the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Let's try something new. Let's put the staffing where those offices are that are in need of it most. Two of them are in California and two of them are in the Lone Star State. Chicago also needs help. You name it. Let's try that instead of just doing what we have been doing. It adds no money to the bill, and it also does not take any money away from existing offices.

□ 1640

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say this. Even though staffing at the VA's 58 regional offices has increased by almost 300 people since September 2010, because of turnover and loss of more than 2,000 workers temporarily paid through stimulus funds, the VA regional offices are severely understaffed. Overtime will not be the answer. At a majority of the regional offices, including those in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Waco, and Oakland, the VA presently employs fewer people than it did 2 years ago, according to their own internal documents.

Let's take the leadership on this issue and do something that's a little different than, quite frankly, a resource allocation model which the determined Under Secretary says makes no sense.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I have no opposition to the gentleman's amendment and share his frustration and concern, as Mr. BISHOP and I and the subcommittee have done in this bill repeatedly throughout the series of our hearings to literally pound on the VA to get them to move more rapidly on this backlog.

We have included, Mr. BISHOP and I, in this bill, very powerful and strong reporting language that we're going to get detailed information on a level that we've never seen before from the VA. In fact, later today we're going to have an amendment from Mr. KINGston of Georgia that I will support that will hold the VA to the same standard as the private sector in that either they meet their performance levels that they have set for themselves or they will not be paid, as they are in the private sector. You miss your goal, you don't get your full compensation.

We are addressing this in a number of different ways. I think the gentleman's amendment is helpful and constructive in driving home the point to the VA that it's absolutely vital that we get this backlog disposed of and that we expect the VA to live up to the time line that they've promised us, and that's to eliminate the backlog within the next 24 months by the year of 2015.

And so we have no opposition to the gentleman's amendment, and we appreciate his concern for ensuring that our men and women in uniform receive the disability benefits that they have so rightly earned.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I think this is a subject on which we need to tread very, very, very carefully. As we all know, the VA announced that it's mandating the use of overtime for claims processors at the 56 regional offices as part of a ''surge'' aimed at eliminating the disabilities claims backlog.

This effort is the latest in a series of measures that the VA has adopted in recent months in response to sharp criticism and to the cajoling by Members of this Congress and the public over the number of claims pending from veterans seeking disability compensation. That number, which was over 900,000 earlier this year, had fallen to 843,000 as May 13, with more than two-thirds of those having been pending for over 125 days. I believe that Secretary Shinseki should and I believe that Secretary Shinseki is using every option available to him to make progress in eliminating this backlog.

Furthermore, the overtime measure is on top of the VA's recent announcement that it's giving priority to claims that have been pending for longer than a year. I believe that the increased overtime initiative coupled with the expedited claims initiative will provide more veterans with more expedited decisions on their claims and will help us to achieve our goal of eliminating the claims backlog. I believe that this overtime initiative correctly shows that the Secretary's commitment is there to end the problem of the backlog. And so I think we should tread very carefully in this regard.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. AMODEI).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. AMODEI. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Nevada will be postponed.

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWNLEY of California. Mr. Chairman, this bill is one of the most important that the House will consider all year. It provides critical funds for military training facilities, improves living conditions for our troops and their families, and addresses the needs of our Nation's veterans.

As ranking member of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health, however, I wanted to bring your attention to a serious issue.

As you know, the advance appropriations process ensures that the VA health care funding is not delayed by Congress' failure to pass the appropriations bills on time. For the past 3 years, the GAO has been required to review the accuracy of the administration's projections for advance funding for veterans' health care programs. The report helps Congress evaluate VA projections for advance appropriations and ensures the VA receives the funding needed for veterans' health care.

Unfortunately, this GAO reporting requirement is scheduled to sunset on September 30. I believe this requirement should be extended, and a number of veterans service organizations have expressed concerns about this issue as well.

As the bill moves forward, I ask the committee to review this issue and continue the reporting requirement.

On another note, one of our most important obligations is to ensure adequate training and support of our troops. That is why one of my first stops as a Member of Congress was to Naval Base Ventura County. For fiscal year 2014, the Navy has requested funding for several important projects at Point Mugu and Port Hueneme, including military housing, training, and maintenance facilities. This bill provides funding for base infrastructure improvements, but it is a decrease from last year and also below the DOD request.

On behalf of my constituents serving at Naval Base Ventura County, I would like to express my hope that these reductions do not come at the expense of the much-needed infrastructure improvements at Point Mugu and Port Hueneme.

As a VA committee member, I am also pleased that H.R. 2216 funds veterans' benefits and programs. It provides $43.6 billion for VA medical services to serve about 6.5 million veterans.

It supports mental health care services, suicide prevention activities, traumatic brain injury treatment, homeless veterans' programs, and rural health initiatives. It continues work on an integrated DOD-VA electronic health record system, the paperless claims process system, digital scanning of health records, and transparent reporting on our progress with the claims backlog for VA benefits.

Finally, it funds construction and renovation of hundreds of VA health clinics, medical residences, and nursing homes. Support of our servicemembers, veterans, and their families is of the highest importance. However, we must be mindful of the entire budget picture.

Like many of my colleagues, I am concerned that we are operating under inadequate discretionary budget caps that will not allow us to provide sufficient funding later in the appropriations process for programs that are important to middle class families and seniors, such as education and health care programs.

While this bill is not perfect, it does provide critical funding for our Nation's military construction projects and for our Nation's veterans, and I intend to support the final passage of this bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For necessary expenses for information technology systems and telecommunications support, including developmental information systems and operational information systems; for pay and associated costs; and for the capital asset acquisition of information technology systems, including management and related contractual costs of said acquisitions, including contractual costs associated with operations authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code, $3,683,344,000, plus reimbursements: *Provided*, That $1,026,400,000 shall be for pay and associated costs, of which not to exceed $30,792,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2015: *Provided further*, That $2,161,653,000 shall be for operations and maintenance, of which not to exceed $151,316,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2015: *Provided further*, That $495,291,000 shall be for information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement, and shall remain available until September 30, 2015: *Provided further*, That amounts made available for information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement may not be obligated or expended until the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Chief Information Officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs submits to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a certification of the amounts, in parts or in full, to be obligated and expended for each development project: *Provided further*, That amounts made available for salaries and expenses, operations and maintenance, and information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement may be transferred among the three sub-accounts after the Secretary of Veterans Affairs requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued: *Provided further*, That amounts made available for the ''Information Technology Systems'' account for development, modernization, and enhancement may be transferred among projects or to newly defined projects: *Provided further*, That no project may be increased or decreased by more than $1,000,000 of cost prior to submitting a request to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress to make the transfer and an approval is issued, or absent a response, a period of 30 days has elapsed: *Provided further*, That none of the funds made available under this Act may be obligated or expended for the development or procurement of an electronic health record unless the health record will be a single, joint, common, integrated health record with an open architecture that will be used by both the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense: *Provided further*, That funds made available for such an integrated electronic health record may not be obligated or expended until the Secretaries of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs jointly certify in writing to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress that the proposed integrated electronic health record will be the sole electronic health record system used by each Department and that it meets the requirements established in the previous proviso: *Provided further*, That not more than 25 percent of the funds made available for the integrated electronic health record may be obligated or expended until: (1) the Government Accountability Office confirms to the Committees, after reviewing the Secretaries' certification, that the proposed integrated electronic health record system does in fact meet the requirements established in this paragraph; and (2) the Secretaries of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs submit to the Committees, and such Committees approve, a plan for expenditure that: (A) defines the budget and cost baseline for development and procurement of the integrated electronic health record; (B) identifies the deployment timeline for the system for both Departments and the performance benchmarks for deployment; and (C) identifies annual and total spending on such efforts for each Department: *Provided further*, That the funds made available under this heading for information technology systems development, modernization, and enhancement, shall be for the projects, and in the amounts, specified under this heading in the report accompanying this Act.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. CULBERSON

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be considered as read.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 35, line 11, strike ''Act''and insert ''heading''.

Page 35, line 13, strike ''unless'' and all that follows through ''Department:'' on page 36, line 16, and insert the following: ''except for a health record as set forth in the Joint Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2013-2015 of the Department of Veteran Affairs and Department of Defense, Joint Executive Council:''.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

□ 1650

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise today with an amendment to clarify the House Appropriations Subcommittee's intent with regard to the integrated electronic health records system that we want the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs to adopt.

This issue necessarily involves two appropriation subcommittees and two authorizing committees, Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs. We have talked with our friends on the authorizing committees and agree that the best way forward is for language to be included in each one of these bills that conveys a unified position.

I am confident that all parties in Congress and in the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs share the same goal of having an integrated, unified health record.

My amendment removes some of the specificity of the original House language, but retains the reference point of an integrated record. This allows all sides to continue to spend more time to develop mutually acceptable language that we can carry in the National Defense Authorization Act and other legislation as we move forward with this bill as well, which clearly defines the intent of Congress that we will have an integrated record with its capability of helping our men and women in uniform when they move out of active service into the VA.

We are unshakeable in our commitment, as a Congress, to make certain that we solve this problem as quickly as humanly possible. I can tell you that the subcommittee, the committees of jurisdiction, the entire Congress is tired of the delays. We're tired of postponement. We're tired of disputes. This has to be solved immediately.

And I'm going to continue to work aggressively with our colleagues on the authorizing committee and with our good friends on the Defense Appropriation Subcommittee, all of us together, arm-in-arm, regardless of party, from all parts of the country, to make sure that we get one single, unified, integrated electronic medical record as fast as humanly possible.

So that's the reason I offer this amendment today, and I urge its support.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I believe that this amendment reflects the apparent obstruction of the Department of Defense on the electronic health record issue; and let me explain to you how we got here.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act directed the two Departments to develop a single electronic health

record system that will follow a servicemember from the time he or she enlisted in the military to the time they exited the VA care, by 2009.

However, after a number of management, oversight, and planning snags and snafus, and the cost estimates that grew from $4 billion to now nearly $12 billion, former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki decided to alter their plans to focus on making that current electronic health record system more interoperable.

Just recently, Secretary Hagel, the Department of Defense, made the decision to modernize the Defense Department's electronic health record through purchase of commercial software. A recent memo released by the Department of Defense makes no reference to the integrated electronic health records; and it seems more of the same go-it-alone, stovepipe approach that has been favored by the Pentagon in the past.

In addition to the Department of Defense's memo, it also made no mention of the congressionally mandated role of the Interagency Program Office set up to run the integrated electronic health records project and staffed by more than 300 personnel from both Departments.

Finally, by going the commercial route, I believe the Department of Defense has opened up its latest electronic health records scheme to protest and subsequent delays.

With all these issues I laid out, some still want to think that the Department of Defense should be free to do whatever it pleases.

Mr. Chairman, paper is a problem, and we cannot keep letting servicemembers leave the Department of Defense with paper records. Please know that this situation will be addressed further as we move through the process.

And we support the gentleman's amendment. I think it is timely. I think it is necessary.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CULBERSON).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk that would strike section 413 of this bill.

First of all, I have great respect, even affection, for the chairman of the subcommittee and the ranking member, and their exemplary staff, Mr. Washington. But section 413 of this bill, Mr. Chairman, would prohibit funds to construct, renovate, or expand any facility in the U.S. for the purposes of housing Guantanamo detainees.

According to a recent GAO report, there are prisons in the U.S. that could hold the Guantanamo detainees as safely and securely as the security conditions at the Guantanamo facility. The Department of Defense and the Department of Justice both operate detention facilities comparable to Guantanamo Bay and currently hold convicted terrorists and other felons connected to terrorism.

The GAO report, however, noted that existing facilities would need to be slightly modified, and current inmates would need to be relocated perhaps. But this would prohibit that.

I can't imagine that there are Members of this Chamber that believe that indefinitely detaining individuals at Guantanamo Bay for the rest of their lives, without access to a fair trial, comports with American standards of justice.

Now, first of all, a few words about Gitmo itself. Eighty-six percent of the Guantanamo detainees were captured in exchange for a bounty. A majority of these young men never actually committed an act of violence against the United States or its allies. Five percent were perhaps members of al Qaeda. So let's assume that 5 percent were, because there seems to be some indication that they were; but 95 percent were not.

From a national security standpoint, Gitmo has been too easily used as a rallying cry and a recruitment tool for our enemies. For that reason, its continued existence really is a direct threat to our national security.

Language such as is in this bill has constrained the President's options for closing this detention facility. President Obama still retains the authority to significantly decrease the prison's population, though, should he choose to do so. He could waive the certification requirements if receiving countries take actions to substantially mitigate the risk that a detainee were to re-engage in terrorism. That would clear the release of at least 86 detainees, about half of the entire prison's population.

Since Guantanamo was opened, the statistics indicate that about 13 percent may have become recidivists. But less than 5 percent of President Obama's transfers have.

Military strategy often dictates that by releasing lower-threat detainees, you mitigate the risk of radicalizing more. We released many foot soldiers in Afghanistan who are far worse than the Guantanamo detainees.

But what is most relevant to this bill's language is that 46 detainees have been designated for indefinite detention, either because they are too dangerous to release, or they can't be charged in a court due to evidentiary standards.

The President did establish a Periodic Review Board, but the panel has never been formed. Frankly, the President should do that.

But those detainees that cannot be transferred, I think, should be tried in courts here in the United States. The problem is, given the limitation that Congress has wrongly placed on such transfers, that can't be done today, notwithstanding the fact that our Federal courts have tried more than 1,000 terrorists.

The United States already holds 373 individuals convicted of terrorism in 98 facilities across the country. There are six Department of Defense facilities where Guantanamo detainees could be held in the United States that are currently at a combined 48 percent capacity. In other words, less than half the capacity is being used.

Believing that they will never leave Cuba, more than 100 are protesting their indefinite detention the only way that they can, with a hunger strike. Thirty-seven detainees are currently being tube-fed. It's a procedure that requires a lubricated plastic tube to be inserted down a detainee's nose and into their stomach while they're being restrained. They are then held in a chair for about 2 hours to force them to digest the liquid.

The fact is that the President can't do what he needs to do as long as section 413 remains in this bill, and that's why my amendment would remove this restriction.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1700

Mr. VARGAS. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VARGAS. Today, I rise in support of the efforts to address the increasing backlog of veterans disability claims in the FY 2014 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. We must do everything in our power to ensure that the men and women who have served honorably in the armed services receive the full benefits they have earned protecting our Nation and our freedoms abroad. It is a shame that our veterans have to wait an average of 321 days to receive a response from the Department of Veterans Affairs after filing a claim.

In my district, I have the privilege of representing the southern portion of San Diego County and all of Imperial County in California. San Diego is the home to the third-largest veteran resident population in the Nation. Current processing times have tripled in the area since 2009, with over 28,500 pending disability claims being processed and an average wait time of 334 days.

As we continue to wind down our operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, more and more men and women will be seeking the benefits they are owed. We must continue to find workable solutions for these heroes and their families. This bill presented today provides more than $290 million to help the VA meet its goal of ending its disability claim backlog by 2015. In order to meet this deadline, funds will be provided for the digital scanning of health and benefit files and for the development of a

paperless process claim system. Additionally, $344 million will be appropriated to the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to implement a single, integrated health record system used by both Departments. Both of these measures are needed to speed up the processing and to modernize our record-keeping system.

We must also hold the VA accountable for its results, and I am glad to see that the monthly reporting requirements on the process of the expedited claims initiative for veterans is included in this bill.

During the final throes of the Civil War, President Lincoln affirmed the government's obligation to care for those injured during the war and to provide for the families of those who perished on the battlefield. With the commitment ''to care for him, who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan,'' President Lincoln laid the foundation for our moral responsibility to our Nation's veterans. Let's continue to work in this tradition by reducing the backlog and the wait times of disability claims for the veterans and their families across our Nation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the remainder of the bill through page 59, line 18, be considered as read, printed in the RECORD, and open to amendment at any point.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The text of that portion of the bill is as follows:

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

For necessary expenses of the Office of Inspector General, to include information technology, in carrying out the provisions of the Inspector General Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. App.), $116,411,000, of which $6,000,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2015.

CONSTRUCTION, MAJOR PROJECTS

For constructing, altering, extending, and improving any of the facilities, including parking projects, under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, or for any of the purposes set forth in sections 316, 2404, 2406, and chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, not otherwise provided for, including planning, architectural and engineering services, construction management services, maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project, services of claims analysts, offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs, and site acquisition, where the estimated cost of a project is more than the amount set forth in section 8104(a)(3)(A) of title 38, United States Code, or where funds for a project were made available in a previous major project appropriation, $342,130,000, of which $322,130,000 shall remain available until September 30, 2018, and of which $20,000,000 shall remain available until expended: *Provided further*, That except for advance planning activities, including needs assessments which may or may not lead to capital investments, and other capital asset management related activities, including portfolio development and management activities, and investment strategy studies funded through the advance planning fund and the planning and design activities funded through the design fund, including needs assessments which may or may not lead to capital investments, and salaries and associated costs of the resident engineers who oversee those capital investments funded through this account, and funds provided for the purchase of land for the National Cemetery Administration through the land acquisition line item, none of the funds made available under this heading shall be used for any project which has not been approved by the Congress in the budgetary process: *Provided further*, That funds made available under this heading for fiscal year 2014, for each approved project shall be obligated: (1) by the awarding of a construction documents contract by September 30, 2014; and (2) by the awarding of a construction contract by September 30, 2015: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall promptly submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a written report on any approved major construction project for which obligations are not incurred within the time limitations established above.

CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS

For constructing, altering, extending, and improving any of the facilities, including parking projects, under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs, including planning and assessments of needs which may lead to capital investments, architectural and engineering services, maintenance or guarantee period services costs associated with equipment guarantees provided under the project, services of claims analysts, offsite utility and storm drainage system construction costs, and site acquisition, or for any of the purposes set forth in sections 316, 2404, 2406, and chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, not otherwise provided for, where the estimated cost of a project is equal to or less than the amount set forth in section 8104(a)(3)(A) of title 38, United States Code, $714,870,000, to remain available until September 30, 2018, along with unobligated balances of previous ''Construction, Minor Projects'' appropriations which are hereby made available for any project where the estimated cost is equal to or less than the amount set forth in such section: *Provided*, That funds made available under this heading shall be for: (1) repairs to any of the nonmedical facilities under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department which are necessary because of loss or damage caused by any natural disaster or catastrophe; and (2) temporary measures necessary to prevent or to minimize further loss by such causes.

GRANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF STATE EXTENDED CARE FACILITIES

For grants to assist States to acquire or construct State nursing home and domiciliary facilities and to remodel, modify, or alter existing hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary facilities in State homes, for furnishing care to veterans as authorized by sections 8131 through 8137 of title 38, United States Code, $82,650,000, to remain available until expended.

GRANTS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF VETERANS CEMETERIES

For grants to assist States and tribal organizations in establishing, expanding, or improving veterans cemeteries as authorized by section 2408 of title 38, United States Code, $44,650,000, to remain available until expended.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 201. Any appropriation for fiscal year 2014 for ''Compensation and Pensions'', ''Readjustment Benefits'', and ''Veterans Insurance and Indemnities'' may be transferred as necessary to any other of the mentioned appropriations: *Provided*, That before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and such Committees issue an approval, or absent a response, a period of 30 days has elapsed.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 202. Amounts made available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2014, in this Act or any other Act, under the ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', and ''Medical Facilities'' accounts may be transferred among the accounts: *Provided*, That any transfers between the ''Medical Services'' and ''Medical Support and Compliance'' accounts of 1 percent or less of the total amount appropriated to the account in this or any other Act may take place subject to notification from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of the amount and purpose of the transfer: *Provided further*, That any transfers between the ''Medical Services'' and ''Medical Support and Compliance'' accounts in excess of 1 percent, or exceeding the cumulative 1 percent for the fiscal year, may take place only after the Secretary requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued: *Provided further*, That any transfers to or from the ''Medical Facilities'' account may take place only after the Secretary requests from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued.

SEC. 203. Appropriations available in this title for salaries and expenses shall be available for services authorized by section 3109 of title 5, United States Code; hire of passenger motor vehicles; lease of a facility or land or both; and uniforms or allowances therefore, as authorized by sections 5901 through 5902 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 204. No appropriations in this title (except the appropriations for ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects'') shall be available for the purchase of any site for or toward the construction of any new hospital or home.

SEC. 205. No appropriations in this title shall be available for hospitalization or examination of any persons (except beneficiaries entitled to such hospitalization or examination under the laws providing such benefits to veterans, and persons receiving such treatment under sections 7901 through 7904 of title 5, United States Code, or the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.)), unless reimbursement of the cost of such hospitalization or examination is made to the ''Medical Services'' account at such rates as may be fixed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 206. Appropriations available in this title for ''Compensation and Pensions'', ''Readjustment Benefits'', and ''Veterans Insurance and Indemnities'' shall be available for payment of prior year accrued obligations required to be recorded by law against the corresponding prior year accounts within the last quarter of fiscal year 2013.

SEC. 207. Appropriations available in this title shall be available to pay prior year obligations of corresponding prior year appropriations accounts resulting from sections 3328(a), 3334, and 3712(a) of title 31, United States Code, except that if such obligations are from trust fund accounts they shall be payable only from ''Compensation and Pensions''.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 208. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, during fiscal year 2014, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, from the National Service Life Insurance Fund under section 1920 of title 38, United States Code, the Veterans' Special Life Insurance Fund under section 1923 of title 38, United States Code, and the United States Government Life Insurance Fund under section 1955 of title 38, United States Code, reimburse the ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration'' and ''Information Technology Systems'' accounts for the cost of administration of the insurance programs financed through those accounts: *Provided*, That reimbursement shall be made only from the surplus earnings accumulated in such an insurance program during fiscal year 2014 that are available for dividends in that program after claims have been paid and actuarially determined reserves have been set aside: *Provided further*, That if the cost of administration of such an insurance program exceeds the amount of surplus earnings accumulated in that program, reimbursement shall be made only to the extent of such surplus earnings: *Provided further*, That the Secretary shall determine the cost of administration for fiscal year 2014 which is properly allocable to the provision of each such insurance program and to the provision of any total disability income insurance included in that insurance program.

SEC. 209. Amounts deducted from enhanced-use lease proceeds to reimburse an account for expenses incurred by that account during a prior fiscal year for providing enhanced-use lease services, may be obligated during the fiscal year in which the proceeds are received.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 210. Funds available in this title or funds for salaries and other administrative expenses shall also be available to reimburse the Office of Resolution Management of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication under section 319 of title 38, United States Code, for all services provided at rates which will recover actual costs but not exceed $42,904,000 for the Office of Resolution Management and $3,360,000 for the Office of Employment and Discrimination Complaint Adjudication: *Provided*, That payments may be made in advance for services to be furnished based on estimated costs: *Provided further*, That amounts received shall be credited to the ''General Administration'' and ''Information Technology Systems'' accounts for use by the office that provided the service.

SEC. 211. No appropriations in this title shall be available to enter into any new lease of real property if the estimated annual rental cost is more than $1,000,000, unless the Secretary submits a report which the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress approve within 30 days following the date on which the report is received.

SEC. 212. No funds of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall be available for hospital care, nursing home care, or medical services provided to any person under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, for a non-service-connected disability described in section 1729(a)(2) of such title, unless that person has disclosed to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in such form as the Secretary may require, current, accurate third-party reimbursement information for purposes of section 1729 of such title: *Provided*, That the Secretary may recover, in the same manner as any other debt due the United States, the reasonable charges for such care or services from any person who does not make such disclosure as required: *Provided further*, That any amounts so recovered for care or services provided in a prior fiscal year may be obligated by the Secretary during the fiscal year in which amounts are received.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 213. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, proceeds or revenues derived from enhanced-use leasing activities (including disposal) may be deposited into the ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects'' accounts and be used for construction (including site acquisition and disposition), alterations, and improvements of any medical facility under the jurisdiction or for the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Such sums as realized are in addition to the amount provided for in ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects''.

SEC. 214. Amounts made available under ''Medical Services'' are available—

(1) for furnishing recreational facilities, supplies, and equipment; and

(2) for funeral expenses, burial expenses, and other expenses incidental to funerals and burials for beneficiaries receiving care in the Department.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 215. Such sums as may be deposited to the Medical Care Collections Fund pursuant to section 1729A of title 38, United States Code, may be transferred to ''Medical Services'', to remain available until expended for the purposes of that account.

SEC. 216. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may enter into agreements with Indian tribes and tribal organizations which are party to the Alaska Native Health Compact with the Indian Health Service, and Indian tribes and tribal organizations serving rural Alaska which have entered into contracts with the Indian Health Service under the Indian Self Determination and Educational Assistance Act, to provide healthcare, including behavioral health and dental care. The Secretary shall require participating veterans and facilities to comply with all appropriate rules and regulations, as established by the Secretary. The term ''rural Alaska'' shall mean those lands sited within the external boundaries of the Alaska Native regions specified in sections 7(a)(1)–(4) and (7)–(12) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1606), and those lands within the Alaska Native regions specified in sections 7(a)(5) and 7(a)(6) of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1606), which are not within the boundaries of the Municipality of Anchorage, the Fairbanks North Star Borough, the Kenai Peninsula Borough or the Matanuska Susitna Borough.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 217. Such sums as may be deposited to the Department of Veterans Affairs Capital Asset Fund pursuant to section 8118 of title 38, United States Code, may be transferred to the ''Construction, Major Projects'' and ''Construction, Minor Projects'' accounts, to remain available until expended for the purposes of these accounts.

SEC. 218. None of the funds made available in this title may be used to implement any policy prohibiting the Directors of the Veterans Integrated Services Networks from conducting outreach or marketing to enroll new veterans within their respective Networks.

SEC. 219. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a quarterly report on the financial status of the Veterans Health Administration.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 220. Amounts made available under the ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', ''Medical Facilities'', ''General Operating Expenses, Veterans Benefits Administration'', ''General Administration'', and ''National Cemetery Administration'' accounts for fiscal year 2014 may be transferred to or from the ''Information Technology Systems'' account: *Provided*, That before a transfer may take place, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall request from the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress the authority to make the transfer and an approval is issued.

SEC. 221. Of the amounts made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2014, in this Act or any other Act, under the ''Medical Facilities'' account for nonrecurring maintenance, not more than 20 percent of the funds made available shall be obligated during the last 2 months of that fiscal year: *Provided*, That the Secretary may waive this requirement after providing written notice to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 222. Of the amounts appropriated to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2014 for ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', ''Medical Facilities'', ''Construction, Minor Projects'', and ''Information Technology Systems'', up to $254,257,000, plus reimbursements, may be transferred to the Joint Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund, established by section 1704 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 3571) and may be used for operation of the facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500): *Provided*, That additional funds may be transferred from accounts designated in this section to the Joint Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund upon written notification by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress.

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 223. Such sums as may be deposited to the Medical Care Collections Fund pursuant to section 1729A of title 38, United States Code, for health care provided at facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500) shall also be available: (1) for transfer to the Joint Department of Defense-Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facility Demonstration Fund, established by section 1704 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010 (Public Law 111–84; 123 Stat. 3571); and (2) for operations of the facilities designated as combined Federal medical facilities as described by section 706 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4500).

(INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

SEC. 224. Of the amounts available in this title for ''Medical Services'', ''Medical Support and Compliance'', and ''Medical Facilities'', a minimum of $15,000,000, shall be transferred to the DOD–VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund, as authorized by section 8111(d) of title 38, United States Code, to remain available until expended, for any purpose authorized by section 8111 of title 38, United States Code.

(INCLUDING RESCISSIONS OF FUNDS)

SEC. 225. (a) Of the discretionary funds made available to the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2014, the following amounts which became available on

October 1, 2013, are hereby rescinded from the following accounts in the amounts specified:

(1) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Services'', $1,400,000,000.

(2) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Support and Compliance'', $100,000,000.

(3) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Facilities'', $250,000,000.

(b) In addition to amounts provided elsewhere in this Act, an additional amount is appropriated to the following accounts in the amounts specified to remain available until September 30, 2015:

(1) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Services'', $1,400,000,000.

(2) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Support and Compliance'', $100,000,000.

(3) ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Facilities'', $250,000,000.

SEC. 226. The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress of all bid savings in major construction projects that total at least $5,000,000, or 5 percent of the programmed amount of the project, whichever is less: *Provided*, That such notification shall occur within 14 days of a contract identifying the programmed amount: *Provided further*, That the Secretary shall notify the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress 14 days prior to the obligation of such bid savings and shall describe the anticipated use of such savings.

SEC. 227. The scope of work for a project included in ''Construction, Major Projects'' may not be increased above the scope specified for that project in the original justification data provided to the Congress as part of the request for appropriations.

SEC. 228. The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs shall provide on a quarterly basis to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress notification of any single national outreach and awareness marketing campaign in which obligations exceed $2,000,000.

SEC. 229. The Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress a reprogramming request if at any point during fiscal year 2014, the funding allocated for a medical care initiative identified in the fiscal year 2014 expenditure plan is adjusted by more than $25,000,000 from the allocation shown in the corresponding congressional budget justification. Such a reprogramming request may go forward only if the Committees on Appropriations of both Houses of Congress approve the request or if a period of 14 days has elapsed.

(INCLUDING RESCISSION OF FUNDS)

SEC. 230. Discretionary fiscal year 2014 appropriations in this title are hereby reduced by $24,000,000: *Provided*, That the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall allocate this reduction within the accounts to which the reduction is applied: *Provided further*, That $156,000,000 are hereby rescinded from the fiscal year 2014 funds appropriated in title II of division E of Public Law 113-6 for ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Services'', ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Support and Compliance'', and ''Department of Veterans Affairs, Medical Facilities'': *Provided further*, That the Secretary shall allocate this rescission among the three accounts.

TITLE III

RELATED AGENCIES

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses, not otherwise provided for, of the American Battle Monuments Commission, including the acquisition of land or interest in land in foreign countries; purchases and repair of uniforms for caretakers of national cemeteries and monuments outside of the United States and its territories and possessions; rent of office and garage space in foreign countries; purchase (one-for-one replacement basis only) and hire of passenger motor vehicles; not to exceed $7,500 for official reception and representation expenses; and insurance of official motor vehicles in foreign countries, when required by law of such countries, $57,980,000, to remain available until expended.

FOREIGN CURRENCY FLUCTUATIONS ACCOUNT

For necessary expenses, not otherwise provided for, of the American Battle Monuments Commission, such sums as may be necessary, to remain available until expended, for purposes authorized by section 2109 of title 36, United States Code.

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses for the operation of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims as authorized by sections 7251 through 7298 of title 38, United States Code, $35,272,000: *Provided*, That $2,500,000 shall be available for the purpose of providing financial assistance as described, and in accordance with the process and reporting procedures set forth, under this heading in Public Law 102–229.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE—CIVIL

CEMETERIAL EXPENSES, ARMY

SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses, as authorized by law, for maintenance, operation, and improvement of Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, including the purchase or lease of passenger motor vehicles for replacement on a one-for-one basis only, and not to exceed $1,000 for official reception and representation expenses, $70,685,000. In addition, such sums as may be necessary for parking maintenance, repairs and replacement, to be derived from the ''Lease of Department of Defense Real Property for Defense Agencies'' account.

ARMED FORCES RETIREMENT HOME

TRUST FUND

For expenses necessary for the Armed Forces Retirement Home to operate and maintain the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Washington, District of Columbia, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Gulfport, Mississippi, to be paid from funds available in the Armed Forces Retirement Home Trust Fund, $67,400,000, of which $1,000,000 shall remain available until expended for construction and renovation of the physical plants at the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Washington, District of Columbia, and the Armed Forces Retirement Home—Gulfport, Mississippi.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISION

SEC. 301. Funds appropriated in this Act under the heading ''Department of Defense—Civil, Cemeterial Expenses, Army'', may be provided to Arlington County, Virginia, for the relocation of the federally owned water main at Arlington National Cemetery, making additional land available for ground burials.

TITLE IV

GENERAL PROVISIONS

SEC. 401. No part of any appropriation contained in this Act shall remain available for obligation beyond the current fiscal year unless expressly so provided herein.

SEC. 402. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for any program, project, or activity, when it is made known to the Federal entity or official to which the funds are made available that the program, project, or activity is not in compliance with any Federal law relating to risk assessment, the protection of private property rights, or unfunded mandates.

SEC. 403. No part of any funds appropriated in this Act shall be used by an agency of the executive branch, other than for normal and recognized executive-legislative relationships, for publicity or propaganda purposes, and for the preparation, distribution, or use of any kit, pamphlet, booklet, publication, radio, television, or film presentation designed to support or defeat legislation pending before Congress, except in presentation to Congress itself.

SEC. 404. All departments and agencies funded under this Act are encouraged, within the limits of the existing statutory authorities and funding, to expand their use of ''E-Commerce'' technologies and procedures in the conduct of their business practices and public service activities.

SEC. 405. Unless stated otherwise, all reports and notifications required by this Act shall be submitted to the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

SEC. 406. None of the funds made available in this Act may be transferred to any department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government except pursuant to a transfer made by, or transfer authority provided in, this or any other appropriations Act.

SEC. 407. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used for a project or program named for an individual serving as a Member, Delegate, or Resident Commissioner of the United States House of Representatives.

SEC. 408. (a) Any agency receiving funds made available in this Act, shall, subject to subsections (b) and (c), post on the public website of that agency any report required to be submitted by the Congress in this or any other Act, upon the determination by the head of the agency that it shall serve the national interest.

(b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to a report if—

(1) the public posting of the report compromises national security; or

(2) the report contains confidential or proprietary information.

(c) The head of the agency posting such report shall do so only after such report has been made available to the requesting Committee or Committees of Congress for no less than 45 days.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

SEC. 409. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to maintain or establish a computer network unless such network blocks the viewing, downloading, and exchanging of pornography.

(b) Nothing in subsection (a) shall limit the use of funds necessary for any Federal, State, tribal, or local law enforcement agency or any other entity carrying out criminal investigations, prosecution, or adjudication activities.

SEC. 410. None of the funds made available in this Act may be distributed to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) or its subsidiaries or successors.

SEC. 411. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used by an agency of the

executive branch to exercise the power of eminent domain (to take the private property for public use) without the payment of just compensation.

SEC. 412. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used by an agency of the executive branch to pay for first-class travel by an employee of the agency in contravention of sections 301–10.122 through 301–10.124 of title 41, Code of Federal Regulations.

SEC. 413. (a) IN GENERAL.—None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available to the Department of Defense in this Act may be used to construct, renovate, or expand any facility in the United States, its territories, or possessions to house any individual detained at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for the purposes of detention or imprisonment in the custody or under the control of the Department of Defense.

(b) The prohibition in subsection (a) shall not apply to any modification of facilities at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

(c) An individual described in this subsection is any individual who, as of June 24, 2009, is located at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and who—

(1) is not a citizen of the United States or a member of the Armed Forces of the United States; and

(2) is—

(A) in the custody or under the effective control of the Department of Defense; or

(B) otherwise under detention at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. MORAN

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

Strike section 413.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Virginia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, section 413 prohibits any funds, no matter how small they might be, to renovate or expand any facility in the U.S. for the purposes of housing Guantanamo detainees. The fact is that the Department of Defense does have six facilities where Guantanamo Bay detainees could be held in the United States. Those facilities are currently operating at only 48 percent capacity.

Mr. Chairman, if we were to look deeply into this issue of detention at Guantanamo Bay, we would conclude: number one, that this detention facility doesn't meet the standards of justice that our American jurisprudence system demands; number two, the vast majority of people at Guantanamo Bay should have been released. Even the Bush Administration recognized by their actions, that the vast majority of the 779 people that were put there should never have been detained, because they released most of them; number three, the best place for them to be detained and then tried is in the United States; and number four, the continuance of the Guantanamo Bay facility represents an immediate security threat to the United States because it is a rallying cry and a recruitment tool for our enemies.

Right now, there are more than a hundred detainees that are protesting what appears to be an indefinite detention the only way they can—through hunger strikes. Thirty-seven of them are being tube-fed through their noses into their stomach. They're held for about 2 hours to make sure that this liquid stuff is digested.

Guantanamo has become an immediate humanitarian crisis. It needs to be addressed urgently because the rest of the world can't understand why we don't do the right thing by those detainees who still are at Guantanamo Bay, whom we have cleared. In fact, the Bush administration cleared them for release because they had no evidence on them. President Obama has asked the Congress to lift restrictions on detainee transfers. He's asked DOD to identify a site in the United States for military commissions.

□ 1710

They will appoint a senior envoy charged with transferring detainees to third countries and he's got to lift the restriction on transfers to Yemen. He's going to staff the periodic review board for those that cannot be transferred. I think he should use the certification and waiver provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act to transfer detainees from Guantanamo beginning with the reported 86 detainees already cleared for transfer.

But he can't do what he needs to do for our national security as long as the language of section 413 is in this bill. That's why my amendment would remove this restriction. What we're doing does not comport with America's system of justice or with fairness. And as I say, I believe it's a direct threat to our national security.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would urge that we remove this language by voting for my amendment. We have Department of Defense facilities, they're being underused in the United States, and that's the way that we could clear up a situation that we never should have created in the first place.

At this point—well, can I reserve time in order to respond to Mr. CULBERSON?

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman may not reserve time. Does the gentleman yield back?

Mr. MORAN. I suspected not. So at this point I will yield back, and I'm anxious to hear from the chairman of the subcommittee.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, this language is in the bill because it has strong, bipartisan support. The American people do not want these terrorists, these criminals, captured either on battlefields overseas or who have sworn to kill innocent American men, women and children housed in American prisons.

In the Second World War, Nazi soldiers—saboteurs—landed on Long Island and on the beaches of Florida carrying explosives with the intent of killing innocent Americans. Franklin Roosevelt, as President, when they were captured, they were held and tried in the military, and within 90 days they were executed. The prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, quite frankly, are being treated much more leniently than I think they should be, than most Americans think they should be.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strenuous opposition to the gentleman's amendment. I'd like to, if I could, yield the remainder of my initial time in opposition to my good friend, the chairman of the Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF).

Mr. WOLF. I rise in opposition to my good friend's—and we are good friends—amendment. Let me tell you why. One, at the outset, in the President's first term, an executive order declared the intention to close Guantanamo Bay and bring the detainees to the United States. That proposal was rejected by the Congress overwhelmingly on a bipartisan basis.

Similar language is carried in a Commerce, State, Justice bill on the subcommittee on which I serve. These provisions reflect a consensus of this and previous Congresses.

But let me tell you some of the real reasons why this is a bad and even, I would say, a dangerous amendment.

Several of these men who have been released from Guantanamo have gone back into the battlefield and have killed Americans. Secondly, Director Mueller, and I don't have the letter here, but I will give it to my friend, said this could have an impact on local jails, the locality of the jails. Do you remember the Blind Sheikh Rahman when Officer Pepe was stabbed in the eye with regard to an escape? To bring people like this into the United States could have an impact not only on the jail but also on the community.

To bring Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to the United States would cost roughly, if you recall, $250 million a year. Moussaoui, who was tried in the gentleman's district in Alexandria, it literally upset Alexandria, and if you take the same timeframe that Moussaoui was tried in, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's trial would go on for 4 years, would cost $1 billion—$250 million a year.

Do you remember when this idea first came out, Mayor Bloomberg said nothing, and CHUCK SCHUMER said nothing, and then all of a sudden everything broke loose and Mayor Bloomberg came out against it and Senator SCHUMER came out against it.

Lastly, the Bureau of Prisons, we had to give Holder the ability to reprogram money because they were going to furlough prison guards. They were going to furlough prison guards. So to bring people like this in to put this stress on the Bureau of Prisons would be absolutely crazy.

Let me just debunk another thing. For people who say, and I heard the

President say it, that Guantanamo causes terrorism, Guantanamo Bay Prison was not there when 9/11 took place. The Blind Sheikh who was involved in trying to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993, there was no Guantanamo. It's a hoax to say that. What you say is not true. It's false. To say that Bin Laden and people like that, we're going to say, oh, well, the Congress and the administration they're going to close down Guantanamo, we're going to close down al Qaeda, we're going to close down all the terrorism, it just doesn't make any sense.

This is a bad amendment. The gentleman is a good friend, but it's a bad amendment, and it's a very dangerous amendment and it would cost a lot of money and, quite frankly, I think would endanger the locality.

If you vote for this amendment, you'd better be prepared. What locality wants to bring Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to their local neighborhood. What locality wants to bring Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to their county, to their State? I say none. I urge a ''no'' vote on the amendment.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I would just also say that bringing these terrorists in to the United States we would be giving them American constitutional rights, a very precious, very special privilege that is reserved for the people of the United States. These people should be tried in military court and treated as prisoners of war and the criminals and the cowards that they are. And I urge a ''no'' vote against the amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I stand today also concerned about the policy on Guantanamo Bay detention facility. And as I listened to my colleague and as I consider the speech from the President last week, it is very, very clear that there needs to be additional debate on this subject. Also I understand that the House Armed Services Committee will be holding discussions on this very important issue in the coming days as they begin marking up the National Defense Authorization Act.

And so I say to my colleagues that this issue deserves a more vigorous debate but that this is not the proper venue to hold that debate. As I stated in my opening remarks today, this bill was crafted and brought to the floor as a result of bipartisan work and compromise due to the committee's commitment to our servicemembers, their families and to all of our veterans.

This is a deeply, deeply controversial issue that I believe requires much more in-depth discussion than we can have here today. And I respectfully submit that this appropriations bill is not the appropriate venue for discussion and action on this very, very controversial policy. Today is not the time, and this bill, I submit, is not the place.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Virginia will be postponed.

The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

SEC. 414. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to execute a contract for goods or services, including construction services, where the contractor has not complied with Executive Order No. 12989.

SEC. 415. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

SEC. 416. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless the agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

SEC. 417. None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to wind down or otherwise alter the implementation of a program, project, or activity in anticipation of any change (including any elimination or reduction of funding) proposed in a budget request, until such proposed change is subsequently enacted in an appropriation Act.

SPENDING REDUCTION ACCOUNT

SEC. 418. The amount by which the applicable allocation of new budget authority made by the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives under section 302(b) of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 exceeds the amount of proposed new budget authority is $0.

AMENDMENT NO. 2 OFFERED BY MR. FARR

Mr. FARR. I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to implement Veterans Health Administration directive 2011-004 regarding ''Access to clinical programs for veterans participating in State-approved marijuana programs''.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

□ 1720

Mr. FARR. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a very simple amendment. As most Members know, 19 States and the District of Colombia have enacted laws that provide for the legal access to medical marijuana. Two of those States provide access to marijuana for more than medicinal purposes.

In checking out the rules within the VA on the matter of medical marijuana, it turns out that there is a policy in force, which is called Directive 2011–004, that specifically ''prohibits VA providers from completing forms seeking recommendations or opinions regarding a veteran's participation in a State marijuana program.''

My amendment denies the VA any funds to implement that prohibition, thus freeing up the VA doctors to assist VA patients in accessing medical marijuana outside of the VA system. All this amendment does is make it possible for the VA doctors to provide medical advice to the VA patients on the relative pros and cons of medical marijuana if they want to have that discussion. For those doctors who wish to offer recommendations to VA patients on accessing medical marijuana, they are no longer prohibited from doing so.

Essentially, the VA order is a censorship in those 19 States and the District of Columbia saying that doctors can't even have this discussion, yet the civilians going to a civilian doctor can have that discussion. So what we're doing is removing the ability for the VA to enforce that provision thinking that that's fair.

This is a very controversial, I know, issue of medical marijuana, but in those States that have made it the law of that State, then veterans ought to be treated equally with civilian patients in being able to have access to the total array of applicable medical devices, including the use of medical marijuana.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Oregon is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate my colleague, Mr. FARR, bringing this forward. I agree with what he said, except for one item. And that is that somehow medical marijuana is intensely controversial. What we're finding is that with the American public it's no longer really that controversial. As he said, 20 jurisdictions, 19 States and the District of Columbia, have approved medical marijuana to be available to their citizens. Over 1 million Americans are people who are legally entitled to have the qualities of medical marijuana.

It has long been recognized that it has therapeutic values. They use it to deal with chronic paralyzing pain, the nausea associated with chemotherapy, symptoms of multiple sclerosis. There are many applications that are going to make a difference to our veterans dealing with traumatic brain injury or PTSD.

Now, it is ironic that when we are trying to have a veterans health system that deals with the total patient—and the committee just supported an amendment that I had earlier to help give them alternative therapies—that we would prohibit a VA doctor from even discussing a therapy that is perfectly legal in 20 jurisdictions.

What is the rationale here to prohibit the doctor from being able to have that conversation, forcing our veterans to go outside the system and incur additional costs? I think it is a misguided policy in the extreme.

We are in the process now where the majority of Americans think that marijuana should be legalized; and if you ask the question, ''Should we respect the decisions of States?'' that majority gets even bigger. Over 60 percent say the Federal Government ought not to interfere.

But here, the Veterans Administration is prohibited from giving candid advice to people in our system, people who could benefit, like the over 1 million legal medical marijuana patients. I think that's inappropriate. I think it's unfortunate. I think we should do everything we can to try and relieve the pain and suffering that our veterans are incurring; and if it means having a conversation with a VA doctor about something perfectly legal in their community, I think that's the least we could do.

I commend the gentleman for bringing the amendment forward, and I hope that the day will come when we provide this service to veterans who would like information about it.

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

The Acting CHAIR. Is there further debate on the amendment?

Mr. FARR. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the amendment is withdrawn.

There was no objection.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. KINGSTON

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title) insert the following:

SEC. ____. (a) None of the funds made available in this Act may be used to pay more than 75 percent of the salary of any senior Department of Veterans Affairs official during the period beginning on July 1, 2014, and ending on September 30, 2014, unless as of July 1, 2014, the percentage of disability compensation claims that are more than 125 days old is less than or equal to 40 percent.

(b) In this section, the term ''senior Department of Veterans Affairs official'' means the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and any Under Secretary or Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Georgia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINGSTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This bill provides $43.6 billion for medical treatment for the 6.5 million veterans today who use the VA. It increases funding for processes, such as the electronic health record system and the disability claims process, the paperless environment, and yet that's what we did last year and the year before.

Nonetheless, today, as we sit here, the VA has 865,265 claims in their backlog; 66½ percent of these claims have been pending for more than 125 days. The current claim to be processed, the current amount of time is 292 days, and some offices report some claims that have been pending for 450 days.

This is not acceptable. But every year we provide more money for the VA to process claims, and every year the backlog gets more.

So what this amendment does is it takes a different approach. It takes an approach that's used in the private sector on a regular basis for compensation. It says to the senior members of the VA that if they don't have the claims backlog reduced by 40 percent by next July, the senior leadership will have a pay cut of 25 percent. Mr. Chairman, this follows their own goal. All it says is that if you don't make your own goal, there will be a 25 percent pay reduction for the senior management of the VA.

I think everyone in Congress has a VA office with problems in their own district. In Decatur, Georgia, a VA hospital that serves 86,000 patients in the State of Georgia has a backlog of over 4,000—or 4,000 patients have fallen through the cracks. Three deaths occurred over the past 2 years when the VA lost track of mental health patients and referred it to a contractor while not keeping a close eye on them while they were supposed to be monitored.

□ 1730

One may have committed suicide because he could not see a doctor and had an overdose of his treatment. There are other atrocities that have happened in that one VA clinic. Again, Mr. Chairman, this is not adequate. This is not acceptable. For our veterans, we need to treat them better.

I am a member of the Armed Services Committee and often say that the American soldier needs to have the best equipment and the best training that's out there because we want them to fight and win wars; but we also want them to come home and live normal lives, so we need to make sure that our treatment of the American military does not end in a theater of war but continues throughout the rest of their lives. As the claims or as the injuries that they incurred while rendering service to the Nation haunt them for the rest of their lives, we need to be there for them for their medical treatment.

This amendment sends a very strong signal to the VA that we are serious that this backlog will be cleaned up and that, if not, there will be a price to pay.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. I believe Mr. KINGSTON has correctly identified the problem in the private sector. If you don't meet a performance goal, you're going to suffer a cut in pay. You can be discharged from your job. Mr. KINGSTON correctly points out that the VA set their own standard. They have set this goal of eliminating the backlog by the year 2015. Mr. KINGSTON's amendment simply says that, if they don't meet their own standard—their own yardstick, a measurement of success in reducing the backlog—that there will be a pay cut of 25 percent to the senior leadership that is responsible for setting this goal, that's responsible for leading the VA and executing this goal.

Congress is, frankly, tired of the delays, tired of the excuses, and we want our veterans to receive what they have earned. We want to be sure that they are given compensation for the injuries they suffered in the course of service to the United States of America, so I urge the adoption of Mr. KINGSTON's amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I could not agree more with the gentleman from Georgia that the claims backlog is absolutely unacceptable.

I think the chairman of the full Appropriations Committee, the ranking member of the full Appropriations Committee, the chairman of our subcommittee, and yours truly as the ranking member of the subcommittee have met with and have criticized and have done everything that we could possibly do to try to bring to the attention of the Veterans Administration and the Secretary of the need to have this backlog addressed, and I do think we address that in this bill; but I must rise in opposition to this amendment.

When I talk to veterans, the number one issue that they always have is the claims and claims backlog. The number one issue being worked on by my staff in southwest Georgia is VA claims and the claims backlog. I believe that what we have done in this bill will finally do something about the backlog.

Now let me just put a pin right there for a moment. The backlog, while inexcusable, does have some basis.

Just a couple of years ago, this Congress, in an effort to support our Vietnam era veterans, made it possible for the Agent Orange claims to be covered by the VA even though that had been an ongoing issue for the two decades that I've been a Member of Congress. As a result of that, there was a great surge of VA claims by Vietnam veterans, which added to the backlog. Add to that the returning veterans from Iraq and now from Afghanistan, which has added even more to that backlog, resulting in the now almost 850,000 claims when, 2 years ago, before the Agent Orange claims, we had just about eliminated that backlog.

I think that, even though there is some justification, the backlog is inexcusable, but in this bill that we are debating right now, we've done something about the backlog:

First, the bill fully funds the general operating expenses by the VBA, which will support 20,851 claims processors, which is 94 more than in last year's bill, and all 94 of these new claims processors will work disability claims. The bill fully funds the Veterans Benefits Management System at $155 million and the Veterans Claims Intake Program at $136.4 million. These two efforts should speed up the VA's efforts to take old claims that are filed on paper and convert them into digital files that are easily searchable by the claims processors, thus speeding up the claims process;

Second, we include a monthly reporting requirement for the VA to provide Congress with several statistics, such as the average wait time at each regional office, the rating inventory that has been pending for 125 days, rating claims accuracy, and month-to-month updates of any changes in those statistics;

Third, we require a report on the VA's expedited claims initiative that was announced just a few weeks ago. This report should give the committee insight into whether or not the Secretary's new initiative is having a positive result.

I believe that we should let the measures in this bill take effect before we turn to these more drastic measures. I understand the frustration that the gentleman feels and that is felt by most of the Members of this Congress, and I understand the frustration that is felt by our veterans and even by the Secretary, who is quite frustrated. I am open to all reasonable methods to solve the problem, but I believe that we should avoid measures like this as it is unnecessarily punitive, and I believe that the measures that we have put forth in this bill will adequately get results, accountability, and ultimately meet our objective of eliminating the claims backlog by 2015.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. I ask unanimous consent to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. I yield to my good friend, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON).

Mr. KINGSTON. I thank the gentleman from Texas for the time.

To my friend from Georgia, who I know is just as fervent as we are in terms of cleaning up the backlog, I would say the only part with which we are in disagreement is this approach, again emphasizing that this committee has provided the adequate funding to reduce the backlog. We did it last year, and we did it the year before, and we did it the year before that.

What we are doing with this amendment is what the private sector does every single day—it bases compensation on performance. We are saying, if you don't perform to your own guidelines, there will be a compensation penalty for it.

Congress has reduced its expenses, depending on the committee, anywhere from 8 to 14 percent. We have not had a COLA in several years now. In fact, the only way the United States Senate passed a budget this year was because of an amendment that was offered, called ''no budget, no pay,'' and the House passed a budget, too, under that threat. One way you do get people's attention is to say, You have got to perform in your job or there will be a salary cut. That's all we're doing.

For the men and women who put their lives on the line for our country that we could have this debate today and that we can go about our lives tomorrow and the next day and raise families in a free and independent country, we owe it to them. A backlog of 800,000 claims is not acceptable, and we are tired of talking about it. This amendment takes the final step. We are going to make a change. We are going to get that backlog cleaned up.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, it's common sense that your performance should be tied to your pay, so I urge the adoption of the gentleman from Georgia's amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. KINGSTON).

The amendment was agreed to.

□ 1740

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. KUSTER

Ms. KUSTER. I have an amendment at the desk and offer that amendment at this time.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used for any conference (as described in the Office of Management and Budget memorandum M-12-12, ''Promoting Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations'', dated May 11, 2012) for which the cost to the agency exceeds $500,000.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from New Hampshire is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KUSTER. Mr. Chairman, my amendment is straightforward. It would prohibit the Federal Government from spending more than $500,000 of the funds appropriated by this bill on any single conference. This amendment would simply enforce the Obama administration's May 11, 2012, Office of Management and Budget memorandum promoting efficient spending.

I understand the need for the VA and other agencies to invest in workforce development, and I recognize the role that conferences can play in improving services for our constituents. But from the GSA to the IRS, time and again we have seen Federal agencies misuse public funds at conferences and make expenditures of questionable value. In recent years, this problem has extended to the VA.

In 2011, the VA spent over $6 million on just two conferences. This prompted an investigation by the Department's Inspector General, who documented numerous examples of excessive cost and unnecessary and unsupported expenditures, including over $49,000 for a parody video, over $97,000 for unnecessary promotional items, and over $43,000 in awards paid to the staff managing these conferences.

We can all agree that the VA should focus its limited resources on its core mission: serving those brave men and women who have worn the uniform and served our country.

There are so many worthwhile uses for VA funding, from eliminating the egregious claims backlog, to improving support for survivors of military sexual trauma, to expanding access to health care services in rural communities such as in my district in the northern town of Colebrook, New Hampshire, on the Canadian border.

I commend my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their support for America's veterans.

Out of respect for our constituents during these times of enhanced fiscal responsibility and in service to our veterans, I urge my colleagues to support this commonsense amendment.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from New Hampshire (Ms. KUSTER).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MR. ROTHFUS

Mr. ROTHFUS. I have an amendment at the desk printed as No. 3 in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay a performance award under section 5384 of title 5, United States Code.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to stand with our Nation's veterans and their families.

We owe our veterans a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. As public servants, we have a solemn obligation to make sure that our veterans receive the respect, support, and care that they have earned and rightly expect.

That responsibility extends to employees and executives of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Unfortunately, the VA has failed veterans in western Pennsylvania and around the Nation.

This failure has resulted in the outrageous disability claims backlog and the unconscionable death of five veterans at the VA Pittsburgh Health Care System. In light of these unresolved problems, no one in the senior leadership of the VA should be paid a performance bonus.

Today, over 865,000 veterans around the Nation are waiting to receive disability benefits from the VA. Of those veterans, almost 576,000 are considered part of the VA backlog, meaning their claims have been pending for more than 125 days.

On average, our Nation's veterans must wait between 316 and 327 days for their first-time disability claims to be processed. Wait times in major population centers and in my district are often longer. For example, veterans must wait 642 days in New York, 619 days in Los Angeles, 542 days in Chicago, 517 days in Philadelphia, and 625 days in Pittsburgh.

The number of veterans who have been forced to wait more than a year to receive their benefits has grown by more than 2,000 percent over the last 4 years, despite significant increases in the VA's budget during the same time period.

In addition, a study conducted by the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review found that veterans who disagree with the VA's initial decision must wait even longer. That study found that it takes an average of 1,040 days for the agency to make decisions in appeals cases. That's almost 3 years.

In fact, some veterans wait so long that they die before their claims are processed. The Trib-Review study found almost 3,000 cases between 2009 and 2013 in which veterans or their surviving spouses died before getting decisions on their disputed claims.

Western Pennsylvania veterans have recently seen even more egregious failures of the VA firsthand in the death of five veterans due to an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease. The VA Inspector General found that the systemic failure of the Pittsburgh VA to follow its own safety protocols and a breakdown in communication resulted in these unconscionable deaths.

Four days after the Inspector General's report was released, the regional director of the Pittsburgh VA was awarded an almost $63,000 bonus and presented with the Presidential Distinguished Rank award.

In total, the VA gave its senior executives bonuses totaling $2.8 million in 2011 and $2.3 million in 2012. Paying bonuses to executives of an organization with this kind of abysmal performance record is ridiculous. In the private sector, this level of performance achievement is rewarded with a pink slip, not a bonus check.

Rather, this hard-earned taxpayer money should be properly directed towards fixing the problems at the VA and ensuring that our veterans receive the first-rate service and care they rightfully deserve. VA executives need to take responsibility, fix these problems, and do their jobs.

I urge my colleagues to stand with our veterans and their families and support the Rothfus-Roby-Tipton-Kelly-Huelskamp amendment.

Mrs. ROBY. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. ROTHFUS. I yield to the gentlewoman from Alabama.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Chairman, I would like to rise in support of the gentleman's amendment and I just want to add—and you've heard the statistics—that the number of backlogged cases—each case represents a veteran who may have earned a benefit but is currently being denied because of bureaucratic delay.

In the last 4 years, the number of VA claims pending for longer than a year has grown by 2,000 percent.

An award of a bonus should be a special recognition of success and accomplishment, not a right or a routine payment.

Mr. Chairman, I don't consider a backlog of over 1.2 million cases to be cause for celebration or reward. I consider it a catastrophe that must be fixed. Restricting the ability to award bonuses until that backlog is cleared is a commonsense good-government policy. I'm pleased to support my colleague's amendment. It is a strong step in that direction.

Mr. ROTHFUS. Reclaiming my time, I urge my colleagues to stand with our veterans and their families by supporting this amendment and yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting Chair. The gentleman from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Chairman, I rise to lend my support for the underlying bill we are debating today that addresses critical health care, housing, education, and unemployment needs for our soldiers who are deploying and our veterans who are returning from the battlefield.

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations measure is one of the most important pieces of legislation Congress considers annually. It provides the necessary funding to house, train, and equip our brave men and women in uniform, support our military families, and maintain our military base infrastructure. Put simply, no one should stand ahead of our men and women in uniform or our Nation's veterans when it comes to making Federal funding decisions.

Critical to this discussion is the priority placed on investments in medical care for our Active Duty servicemembers and veterans.

I appreciate that the committee continues the precedence set in past years of providing advanced appropriations for the VA.

□ 1750

Allowing for advanced appropriations provides a platform for long-term planning and investment in critical programs that meet the emerging needs of our servicemembers and military families.

I want to personally thank the committee for providing these resources that will allow our VA hospitals, including those in my district, to prepare adequately for the number of veterans returning home from deployment. This approach will provide flexibility to capitalize on emerging technology and treatments that will ensure our warriors here at home are receiving the very best health care possible.

As well, I would like to thank the committee for its important work to ensure that we are maintaining investment in our military installations. I applaud the inclusion of $35.8 million for the construction of housing units at Naval Station Great Lakes, located in my district. This funding will allow more servicemembers to receive the training they need, while not overburdening them with complicated, temporary housing conditions.

This forward-looking investment is one that illustrates how we can further utilize existing military infrastructure to achieve efficiencies in training and services. I want to again thank the committee for its work on this important bipartisan bill.

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

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Chairman, we are all outraged in regards to the claims backlog and the incidences of poor quality health services and safety. The current claims backlog is, as we have said over and over today, unacceptable. There is no question that the VA has failed to successfully deliver one of its key missions—to provide timely ratings of disability.

Given this failure, it is hard to imagine how VA leaders responsible for disability claims rating and the claims processing transformation could warrant high performance ratings and substantial bonuses. It is also clear that some VA health facilities have had serious issues that put the health, safety, and well-being of veterans at risk. This, too, is unacceptable. Where these failures have occurred, it is hard to

imagine how the VA leaders of these facilities could have received high performance ratings and substantial bonuses.

However, this amendment will not provide any solution in the short term, and in the long term it may have adverse consequences and compound the very problem that it attempts to address.

Many VA workers are compassionate and hard workers. The previous amendment that was adopted, which was adopted by this body by voice vote, referenced models from the private sector by cutting pay, reducing the pay by 25 percent until the backlog is reduced. However, if you follow that same model from the private sector, bonuses are the converse of that so that when those backlogs are reduced, and if there is exceptional work that goes in to reducing that backlog by those responsible at the VA, then appropriate bonuses could be granted.

This amendment, I submit, would make the VA a less attractive option than other agencies when it comes to recruiting and retaining quality executive leaders, and it will not have the very talent it needs to solve the problems that it faces today, like the claims backlog and the health care deficiencies.

Furthermore, the SES pay and bonuses are governed by title 5 of the United States Code and administered by the Office of Personnel Management. Any change to title 5 to address VA would then also apply to all other Federal agencies. Attempting an across-the-board, one-size-fits-all fix will penalize those dedicated VA executives who are working hard, and well, to find solutions to the VA's problems.

So I urge our colleagues to vote ''no'' on this amendment, that's the Rothfus amendment, not because we don't have the challenges and the obligation to eliminate this backlog and to do it forthwith, but because I think we are going a little bit too far in attempting to create a disincentive for people, not solving this backlog.

I think that recruitment and retention of people in the VA, talented people, talented executives who can effectively solve the challenges that we face, like eliminating the backlog, will be undermined if this amendment should become law.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. I move to strike the last word, Mr. Chairman.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Kansas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HUELSKAMP. Mr. Chairman, I won't take quite that long, but I appreciate the opportunity to visit about this amendment. I have always thought bonuses and performance awards to employees should only be given out to those who go above and beyond the expectations laid out in their job description. An end-of-the-year bonus should never be an assumed addition to an employee's paycheck, but the Department of Veterans Affairs apparently takes a very different approach to performance awards for many of their employees, particularly top-level administrators and supervisors.

As a member of the VA Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, we've held multiple hearings on the mismanagement and negligence of Federal employees at the VA. What's worse, many of these individuals have been rewarded for their behavior.

We're all aware of the situation at the VA Pittsburgh health care system and the outbreak of Legionnaires' disease, but how many of us know that the individual in charge received a bonus for the very year that we potentially had five deaths from that outbreak that could have been prevented?

At another hearing conducted by our Oversight Investigations Committee, I recently asked a VA bureaucrat who had missed deadlines and overspent on VA construction projects of over a billion dollars to explain why he deserved $55,000 in bonuses. In our exchange, he had no idea—claimed to have no idea why he received this bonus; and, actually, neither did I, Mr. Chairman.

Earlier this afternoon, much more troubling, we had another VA Oversight hearing where it was revealed that potentially up to 20 million veterans' records have been hacked and perhaps accessed by foreign state actors, and the individual in charge of the security during these last 4 years when this apparently occurred has received over $87,000 in bonuses. This has become a trend within the VA departments, and I believe taxpayer dollars would be better directed towards protecting the sensitive records of our veterans and their dependents and improving veterans' health care options.

I support this amendment. I am glad my colleague from Pennsylvania has offered it.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I want to express my support for this amendment. I share the gentleman's intense frustration with the VA for their failure to meet their own guidelines and their own deadlines for eliminating the backlog, and I urge adoption of the amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ROTHFUS).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. GRAYSON

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new section:

SEC._____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enter into a contract with any offeror or any of its principals if the offeror certifies, as required by Federal Acquisition Regulation, that the offeror or any of its principals:

(A) within a three-year period preceding this offer has been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against it for: commission of fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) contract or subcontract; violation of Federal or State antitrust statutes relating to the submission of offers; or commission of embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, tax evasion, violating Federal criminal tax laws, or receiving stolen property; or

(B) are presently indicated for, or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity with, commission of any of the offenses enumerated above in subsection (A); or

(C) within a three-year period preceding this officer, has been notified of any delinquent Federal taxes in an amount that exceeds $3,000 for which the liability remains unsatisfied.

Mr. GRAYSON (during the reading). Mr. Chair, I ask unanimous consent to waive the reading.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Chairman, this amendment strengthens existing provisions in the bill by preventing the award of contracts of money allocated under this bill to offerers or principals of offerers who, within the 3-year period preceding the offer, have been convicted or had a civil judgment rendered against them for such action as fraud, theft, bribery, making false statements, tax evasion, and so on.

□ 1800

It would be unconscionable, Mr. Chairman, if we allowed taxpayer money to be given to contractors who have been convicted of such things as bribery; and, therefore, I offer this amendment to prevent that.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GRAYSON).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. RUNYAN

Mr. RUNYAN. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new section:

SEC. 419. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to propose, plan for, or execute a new or additional Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from New Jersey is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. RUNYAN. Mr. Chairman, my amendment states that none of the funds made available by this act may

be used to propose, plan, or execute a new or an additional round of base realignment and closure, otherwise known as BRAC.

We all recognize the budget pressures we face. A round of BRAC closures now will entail a large up-front cost. We should direct these limited dollars to addressing the current mission and readiness needs supporting our warfighters.

For that reason, I urge my colleagues to support this amendment, which helps ensure these funds address current needs. I know that many Members of this Chamber want Congress to continue to have oversight of our base and force structure, and my amendment ensures that we do so.

I thank the chairman and members of the subcommittee for working with me on this important amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I just want to express my support for the gentleman's amendment and urge its adoption by the House.

I yield back the balance of my time

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. RUNYAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. MURPHY OF FLORIDA

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to award any contract in an amount greater than $1,000,000 for which the Department of Defense did not receive at least two offers.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that would boost competitive bidding across defense construction projects.

The Department of Defense manages hundreds of billions of dollars in contracts each year, 43 percent of which are noncompetitively awarded. The Government Accountability Office has reported that the Department of Defense does not keep accurate records of which contracts received multiple bids or why sole-sourced contracts are awarded. This is not good government.

Competition works because it drives down cost while giving consumers greater choice. It is the cornerstone of our free-market economy and needs to be integrated throughout the government.

I recently introduced the SAVE Act with my colleague, Representative DAVID JOYCE from Ohio, to root out wasteful and duplicative government spending. The bipartisan legislation would implement several commonsense solutions outlined by the GAO to reduce up to $200 billion in spending over the next 10 years.

One of the 11 measures in my bill encourages the robust use of competitive bidding to reduce contract costs across all agencies.

Today's amendment is an extension of the SAVE Act. It would prevent the Department of Defense from spending the taxpayers' money on contracts over $1 million that have not received at least two competitive bids.

With the national deficit currently at almost $17 trillion, and the current deficit over $600 billion annually, it is clear that we must rein in government spending, but we must do it in a strategic way, cutting programs that are wasteful, duplicative, or ineffective; and this amendment would do just that.

Mr. Chairman, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this commonsense and cost-saving amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MURPHY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TERRY

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new section:

SEC. 419. None of the funds made available by this Act, including the funds made available for ''Construction, Major Projects'', may be used to increase the funding for any major medical facility project (as defined in subsection (a)(3)(A) of section 8104 of title 38, United States Code), which is under construction as of the date of the enactment of this Act, above the amount specified in the prospectus described in subsection (b) of such section 8104 and the detailed estimate of cost described in paragraph (1) of such subsection.

Mr. TERRY (during the reading). Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to waive the reading.

The Acting CHAIR. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nebraska?

There was no objection.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Nebraska is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Chairman, the Terry amendment requests that none of the funds made available by this act, including the funds made available for the Construction and Major Projects account, be used to increase funding for any major medical facility project that is under construction as of the date of enactment of this act.

A major medical facility project, as defined by section 8104 of Title 38 in the U.S. Code, is a project that involves a total expenditure of more than $10 million. This includes the cost overruns of new VA hospitals.

Take the new VA Hospital in New Orleans that was originally supposed to cost $625 million, but a new GAO report shows that the cost overruns at this particular facility is $370 million, pushing that to a near-billion-dollar hospital.

The Navy Times recently reported about a GAO report that clearly illustrates this problem and should greatly disturb everyone. The Government Accountability Office found that the VA Hospital construction projects in Denver, Las Vegas, New Orleans, and Orlando are, on average, experiencing delays of 35 months and cost overruns of around $366 million. This comes out to about, with the expected costs and the overruns, almost a billion dollars per hospital.

My amendment is designed to stop these cost overruns. In the Omaha metropolitan area, eastern Nebraska and western Iowa, there's about 112,000 underserved veterans in Omaha that are all too familiar with the cost overruns and delays associated with the building of VA hospitals.

We have an almost 70-year-old facility in Omaha that is in dire need of replacement. The infrastructure's decrepit; it's rusting away. The HVAC system is so poor that we can't use many of the rooms. And then on top of that, our seven operating rooms have been shut down recently.

Unfortunately, there's no telling when the VA is going to get to it. The veterans in Omaha are being told that there's no money left.

This isn't just Omaha; this is occurring in California, Texas, and all over the world. This is unfair to the seniors to have this level of cost overruns and mismanagement.

So that's the purpose and reason behind this amendment, to start making them focus on the bidding process, do it right, and not simply just have a bid and then make all the additions and changes afterwards that drive up the costs. And so I urge support for this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Chairman, I would rise in support of the gentleman's amendment. I share his concerns; and that's why, in section 227 of our bill, we included language that's very similar. And I look forward to supporting the gentleman's amendment and working with him in conference to make sure there's no duplication.

The committee is also concerned about increases in costs beyond that originally specified on the project, and that's why we included the section and why I welcome the gentleman's amendment and urge its adoption.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. ENGEL

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used by the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs to lease or purchase new light duty vehicles for any executive fleet, or for an agency's fleet inventory, except in accordance with Presidential Memorandum—Federal Fleet Performance, dated May 24, 2011.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

□ 1810

Mr. ENGEL. On May 24, 2011, President Obama issued a Memorandum on Federal Fleet Performance that requires all new light-duty vehicles in the Federal fleet to be alternate fuel vehicles, such as hybrid, electric, natural gas, or biofuel, by December 31, 2015. My amendment echoes the Presidential Memorandum by prohibiting funds in the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act from being used to lease or purchase new light-duty vehicles, except in accord with the President's Memorandum.

Our transportation sector is by far the biggest reason we send $600 billion per year to hostile nations to pay for oil at ever-increasing costs. But America does not need to be dependent on foreign sources of oil for transportation fuel. Alternative technologies exist today that, when implemented broadly, will allow any alternative fuel to be used in America's automotive fleet. The Federal Government operates the largest fleet of light-duty vehicles in America. According to GSA, there are over 660,000 vehicles in the Federal fleet, with over 14,000 being used by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

By supporting a diverse array of vehicle technologies in our Federal fleet, we will encourage development of domestic energy resources, including biomass, natural gas, agricultural waste, hydrogen, renewable electricity, methanol, and ethanol. Expanding the role these energy sources play in our transportation economy will help break the leverage over Americans held by foreign government-controlled oil companies and will increase our Nation's domestic security and protect consumers from price spikes and shortages in the world oil markets.

Let me say that the gentlewoman from Florida, Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN, and I have a bill that would mandate that by a certain date all vehicles made in America would be flex-fuel vehicles. It would cost $100 or even less to make each vehicle flex-fuel. Other countries have it. America should not be behind other countries. We will be introducing this legislation shortly.

So I ask that my colleagues support the Engel amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. TIPTON

Mr. TIPTON. I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____. The amounts otherwise provided by this Act are revised by reducing the amount made available for ''Department of Veterans Affairs—Departmental Administration—General Administration'', and increasing the amount made available for ''Department of Veterans Affairs—Departmental Administration—Information Technology Systems'', by $10,000,000.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Colorado is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIPTON. Mr. Chairman, I rise today with an amendment to reduce wasteful spending by the Department of Veterans Affairs on conferences and use the money to be able to assist the VA backlog of processing disability claims for veterans. Two-thirds of all veterans who file disability claims with the VA must wait longer than 125 days to be able to receive their benefits. I have seen this firsthand from constituents in my district. People have contacted my office in sheer exasperation by the lack of response and endless delays by the VA in processing their claims.

This isn't a statistic we're talking about. This is literally peoples' lives. Many of the veterans on the backlog are in desperate need of care, care that has been delayed by needless lag of bureaucratic backlogs in the Department of Veterans Affairs. This is deplorable, Mr. Chairman. The VA backlog has grown by over 2,000 percent over the last 4 years, despite an increase in the budget of more than the 20 percent. As of March 28 of this year, the VA reported that there are over 606,007 backlogged claims and 865,989 total claims. Nearly 900,000 veterans who have sacrificed for our country are not getting their benefits. They're not getting the care that they need. Our veterans deserve better.

Despite the inability of the VA to be able to process claims in a timely manner, the agency continues to waste money on unnecessary conferences. In September of 2012, the VA Office of the Inspector General released a report highlighting abuses by the VA at conferences. That report included numerous troubling findings. According to the report, the VA spent more than $6.1 million on two human resource conferences in Orlando, and nearly $100,000 on unnecessary promotional items like bags, pins, and water bottles. In addition to these, the report included information on many more instances of waste, fraud, and abuse at the VA.

Following the release of the OIG report, Congressman JEFF MILLER, chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, stated ''it can be reasonably concluded that 10 to 15 percent of VA's conference spending is wasteful, amounting to $10 to $15 million a year, at the least.'' I wholeheartedly agree with Chairman MILLER. That is why today I'm proposing this amendment to target $10 million in wasteful spending on conferences from the Secretary's $403 million budget and reprioritize these funds to be able to assist with addressing the VA backlog.

It's time that the VA focus their efforts on serving our veterans and processing their claims in a reasonable amount of time—not in 125 days or more. The VA must reduce the backlog, and it won't get it done by wasting time and taxpayer dollars at conferences. It's time that the benefits work for our veterans rather than our veterans having to be able to work for their benefits.

I urge my colleagues to be able to support this commonsense amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. TIPTON).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. MURPHY OF FLORIDA

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), add the following new section:

SEC. 419. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to maintain or improve Department of Defense real property with a zero percent utilization rate according to the Department's real property inventory database, except in the case of maintenance of an historic property as required by the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.) or maintenance to prevent a negative environmental impact as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.).

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. I rise today to offer an amendment to the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill that would eliminate wasteful spending on unused facilities, which could save tens of millions of dollars in fiscal year 2014 alone.

The Department of Defense has hundreds, possibly thousands of buildings and structures that it has rated at zero percent utilization. This is an incredible number of useless facilities the Department of Defense is paying to maintain. Federal agencies, as a whole, must do a better job at managing their facilities. Taxpayers cannot continue paying for unused and underused buildings while the Nation is at record debt levels. That is not good government and that is not smart spending.

That is why I joined with Representative DAVID JOYCE of Ohio to introduce the SAVE Act to root out the up to $200 billion in wasteful and duplicative government spending over the next

years. This amendment is an extension of one of the 11 commonsense solutions included in the bipartisan SAVE Act, preventing the Department of Defense from spending money on facilities that the Department itself has rated at zero percent utilization.

Mr. Chairman, we all agree that we must rein in government spending. The best place to start is by rooting out waste. My amendment is a commonsense solution to do just that, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MURPHY).

The amendment was agreed to.

□ 1820

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word and enter into a colloquy with the gentleman from Georgia, the ranking member of the committee.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARCIA. The President's budget request included $3.6 million for the Special Operations Boat Docks in Key West, Florida. These improvements will help ensure that the Special Forces Underwater Operations School, which trains more than 300 servicemembers and conducts support training for troops preparing for deployments, can continue to meet its critical role in our Nation's defense.

The Appropriations Committee recommended no funds for the project. As I understand it, the subcommittee made that recommendation with no prejudice against the boat dock project. Having determined that the Army had sufficient military construction funds available to complete the project without additional appropriations, the committee recommended no additional funds to undertake the project.

I yield to my friend from Georgia to ask if it is a fair characterization of the committee's recommendation.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I would agree with the gentleman from Florida. The Army does have sufficient funds in bid savings and in unobligated balances from prior military construction appropriations to undertake a $3.6 million project. I would be happy to work with the gentleman to see if the Army would use those existing funds on this project.

Mr. GARCIA. I thank the gentleman, and I look forward to working with him.

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

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. KING OF IOWA

Mr. KING of Iowa. I have an amendment at the desk, Mr. Chairman.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will report the amendment.

The Clerk read as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. 419. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to implement, administer, or enforce the prevailing wage requirements in subchapter IV of chapter 31 of title 40, United States Code (commonly referred to as the Davis-Bacon Act).

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Iowa is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate being recognized. I bring this amendment to the floor out of a sense of fiscal responsibility and a sense of duty to the people that go out and work hard every day and return a value for every dollar, for every hour they invest, a value returned on production.

I have spent my life in the construction industry. We have paid Davis-Bacon wage scales, I believe, in each year that I have been in business, and we were a merit shop operation. So I have both sides of experience to this. I have worked underneath Davis-Bacon wage scales, and I have worked in competition with them.

Davis-Bacon is rooted back in the early 1930s. There was a decision made by a couple of people from New York, both Republicans I might add. They let me down then before I was born. They wanted to provide protectionism for their people in New York and lock out minorities that would be coming from the South to build Federal buildings during that era of the Great Depression in New York. It remains the last vestige of Jim Crow laws that's designed to protect and lock out minorities from the construction industry as far as labor is concerned.

My records on this is it costs a lot of money to have Davis-Bacon wage scales imposed. And our King Construction records show over the years that there is somewhere between 8 and 38 percent increase in the costs that we have to bid a project when we make the adjustment for Davis-Bacon. According to Beacon Hill, there's a 9 to 37 percent increase. I just simply use a 20 percent increase as a rule of thumb to discuss the amount of cost that is extra.

So it's this: if we're going to have federally mandated union scale that turns out to be the increase in price for every Federal construction project that has $2,000 or more in it, the result of that is then that if we're going to build only 4 miles of road instead of 5; only four bridges instead of five; only four military facilities instead of five; only four sets of barracks instead of five; only four training facilities instead of five, we can get 20 percent more production out of the dollars that we have and maintain the quality and maintain that sense of responsibility and have a trained workforce, and we can bring more trainees into the process and we'll employ, according to the study I have in front of me here, an average of about 25,000 more minorities each year within the construction business that's there.

What we have instead is we have some people that are in the industry that sit down once a year and they take a look at the records and they decide, well, let's see, let's pay a little bit more to the people here in labor because we don't want to compete outside of our particular industry. We'll raise these wages and we'll transfer that to the taxpayers. It is not a prevailing wage; it is a mandated union scale. That is the effect of it, Mr. Chairman.

I have lived under this for at least 28 years that I operated King Construction. We're now in about our 38th or 39th year of business. We have deep experience with it; and the quality of the work does not suffer, neither does the finishing, neither does the completion, neither does the bonding. All of this construction industry works better when you have real competition instead of some kind of mandated wage scale. Plus, eliminating the enforcement of Davis-Bacon wage scale brings efficiency in and it brings competition in. It's an impossible and onerous Federal regulation to seek to try to regulate. No one can sit in government and determine what a prevailing wage is.

It upsets the relationship between management and workers. And I've been on both sides of that, on all four sides of it, as a matter of fact. It reduces the efficiency of the crews that are there because it reduces your ability to be flexible with the assignment of workforce and their flexibility to self-assign.

For every possible financial reason, you cannot be fiscally responsible or a fiscal conservative and oppose this amendment, Mr. Chairman. It must be supported by a country that's going deeply in debt. We're borrowing over 40 cents out of every dollar that we spend. Meanwhile, we can save 20 cents out of every dollar in this MilCon appropriation bill simply by eliminating the enforcement of the Davis-Bacon wage scale on it.

So I urge in the strongest terms possible the adoption of this amendment which would eliminate the effect of the last vestige of Jim Crow law with regard to where military construction is concerned, save 20 percent, someplace between 9 and 37 according to Beacon Hill. And we can build five facilities instead of four. This is the right way to go to support my amendment.

I urge its adoption, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Georgia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. I rise in opposition to the amendment.

I respect my good friend, but I am totally baffled by the comparison of Davis-Bacon to Jim Crow laws. I think it's totally inapplicable. Davis-Bacon is a pretty simple concept, and it's a fair one. What the Davis-Bacon Act does is protect the government as well as the workers in carrying out the policy of paying decent wages on government contracts.

The act requires that workers on federally funded construction projects be paid no less than the wages paid in the community for some of the work. It requires that every contract for construction to which the Federal Government is a party in excess of $2,000 contain a provision defining the minimum wages paid to various classes of laborers and mechanics.

Mr. Chairman, the House has taken numerous votes on this issue, and on every vote this body has voted to maintain Davis-Bacon requirements. Last year, we avoided including divisive language like this, and it's my hope that we stop attacking the working class and defeat the amendment before us today and move on to more important matters.

Davis-Bacon wages actually save construction costs. A study of more than 4,000 new schools, some built with prevailing wage and others not, found that there were no significant differences in construction costs associated with prevailing wage requirements. A repeal in Davis-Bacon wages has consistently been shown to increase costs because of the poor construction resulting in repairs, revisions, and project delays and consequently substantial cost overruns all as a result of the increase in employing unskilled, unqualified workers on projects.

For example, when President Bush suspended Davis-Bacon wages during the Hurricane Katrina building efforts, construction costs went up due to the dramatic increase in the employment of unqualified workers.

Opponents of the prevailing wage claim that the government can save billions by eliminating them. But they ignore how the Davis-Bacon Act has proven to increase workforce productivity and result in cost-effective projects. For example, a study of 10 States when nearly half of all highway and bridgework in America is done showed that when high-wage workers were paid double the wage of low-wage workers, they built 74.4 more miles of roadbed and 32.8 more miles of bridges for $557 million less.

Repealing Davis-Bacon wages dramatically decreases the economic benefits to the local community. For example, studies have shown that Davis-Bacon wages generate more than two times the amount spent on the construction project itself in the local community since the workers spend part of their income in local businesses and pay local taxes, all of which recirculates throughout the economy.

Driving wages down will not help to balance the Federal budget. A Florida analysis such as the Bluegrass Institute study fails to take into account the spin-off economic benefits of maintaining prevailing wages. Davis-Bacon improves the skill level and the training of all of the workers. Opponents of prevailing wage regulations assume that repealing the law and lowering wages will not erode training nor lead to an exodus of skilled workers.

□ 1830

They are wrong, because it has that exact effect. Davis-Bacon increases training opportunities for all workers, both union and nonunion.

Finally, a Davis-Bacon wage is usually not a union wage. The Davis-Bacon prevailing wage is based on surveys of wages and benefits paid to various job classifications of construction workers in the community without regard to union membership. According to the Department of Labor, a whopping 72 percent of the prevailing wage rates issued in 2000 were based upon nonunion wage rates. A union wage prevails only if the Department of Labor survey determines that the local union wage is paid to more than 50 percent of the workers in the job classifications.

Let me just say that we have in the past avoided including divisive language in our bill, and it is my hope that we can stop attacking the working class and we can defeat this amendment.

I urge all of the Members in this House to vote ''no.'' Davis-Bacon is good law, it produces good results, and it is cost effective for the taxpayers of the United States.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentlewoman from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Chairman, the MilCon-VA bill should be one of the least controversial measures this committee considers. I am deeply disappointed that instead of seeking to pass the most bipartisan bill possible, some would prefer to weigh down the bill that funds veterans and military construction with divisive riders.

Not only is this procedurally problematic, but it's completely wrong on substance. Repealing Davis-Bacon has consistently, as my colleague has shown, been shown to increase costs. Poor construction results in repairs, revisions, project delays, and cost overruns. Let's not add an unnecessary policy rider that will not be included in the final version.

Again, this is probably one of the most bipartisan bills that we have considered. I have applauded the chair and the ranking member for working so closely together to produce a really important bill that helps our veterans. Why weigh this down with this divisive rider? Let's vote against this amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise in support of my colleague, Mr. KING's amendment, to H.R. 2216, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act. This amendment would ensure that no funds made available by H.R. 2216 could be used to implement, administer, or enforce the Davis-Bacon Act requirements for government contracts.

Mr. Chairman, the Davis-Bacon Act is an anachronistic law that was enacted during the Great Depression to prevent wayfaring contractors from lowballing local construction bids. In defense of my colleague, Mr. KING's characterization, the sponsors of the Davis-Bacon Act originally intended for it to actually discriminate against nonunionized Black workers in favor of White workers belonging to White-only unions. Mr. KING is correct—and that's in all deference to everyone in this debate—but this is indeed a vestigial remnant of the Jim Crow era and has no place in our military construction contracts and should be abandoned.

Furthermore, the Davis-Bacon Act results in billions of wasted taxpayer dollars every year. This act requires Federal construction contractors to pay their workers ''prevailing wages,'' which could be as much as 1½ times greater than their basic pay rate. This results in artificially high costs of construction, which are ultimately shouldered by American taxpayers.

Contractors wishing to offer a lower bid would still be required by law to pay their employees the prevailing wage and file a weekly report of the wages paid to each worker. This has a particularly negative effect on small businesses, as they are often unable to compete due to Davis-Bacon wage and benefit requirements, which reduces competition and further inflates contract rates.

Moreover, Mr. Chairman, Davis-Bacon was enacted before the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act. According to the GAO, these acts have rendered Davis-Bacon obsolete and unnecessary. There are a number of laws passed by this body that protect construction workers without the discriminatory intent and effect of Davis-Bacon.

During this time of fiscal austerity and responsibility, Congress must do all it can to lower Federal contract costs and decrease the burden on American taxpayers. This amendment is intended to stop the hemorrhage of wasteful spending and rein in our debt.

I would urge my colleagues to support this amendment by Mr. KING that would, again, ensure no funds made available by H.R. 2216 could be used to implement, administer, or enforce the wasteful Davis-Bacon Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, I would like to associate myself with the remarks of the gentleman from Georgia and the gentlelady from New York who spoke previously on this, and I rise in strong opposition to the gentleman from Iowa's

amendment that would prevent Davis-Bacon from being enforced on projects under this act.

It is a shame, I believe, that this funding bill—which provides needed facilities for our servicemembers and benefits to our veterans—is being exploited to undermine hardworking Americans, but here we have it.

Ironically, however, in contravention with some of the things that have been said here on the floor under this amendment, Davis-Bacon requires that workers of every color and every gender be paid based on their work, not on the color of their skin, not on their gender. That flies in the face of some of the accusations that have been put out for the original purpose of this.

I do agree with the gentleman from Iowa that there were two Republicans who did originally sponsor this back in 1931, but I disagree that the danger, that the evil that it was trying to fight against back then, has gone away. As a matter of fact, it is just a race to the bottom that would ensue if we got rid of Davis-Bacon.

Like the gentleman from Iowa, I have worked on Davis-Bacon jobs. I was an ironworker for 18 years—very proud to work with the men and women of the building trades—and I've worked on jobs where some of the workers were union and some of the workers were nonunion; but the important thing was that we were not exploited by trying to pit us against each other in a race to the bottom based on the wages that we earned.

Since 1931, the Davis-Bacon Act has required Federal contractors to provide workers the local ''prevailing local wage.'' What happens is that's not the union wage, and in many cases, as the gentleman from Georgia has pointed out, it's the nonunion wage, but it is determined by a survey of the Department of Labor of the wages in that area.

The danger that it's meant to deal with is that, in some areas of the country where there's no work and folks are dealing with the recession or depression-like conditions in the construction industry, unscrupulous contractors can go down there where workers don't have any shot of going to work and they can take them at very low wages and transport them to another area of the country that has work and then depress the wage base in that area. That's what Davis-Bacon is meant to deal with, and that's still the situation that we have today and the danger that we guard against.

On these federally funded construction projects, Davis-Bacon protects these workers by preventing wage exploitation while still ensuring that the value for the taxpayer dollar and work quality are not compromised. This amount would bar funding to administer these wage requirements. Without Davis-Bacon protection, unscrupulous contractors will be free to exploit those tradesmen and -women who, despite a slight recovery in their jobs numbers, still today face high levels of unemployment.

□ 1840

Mr. Chairman, I want to speak for a moment about my time as an ironworker and about my involvement with the men and women of the building trades. These people are incredibly hardworking, they are immensely skilled, and they work in a dangerous industry. They truly care about the craftsmanship, and they are dedicated to getting the job done and doing it right, and working side by side with them was a true honor for me.

Generations of trades workers, by the sweat of their brows and the toil of their hands, built our great Nation. They deserve our respect, as does the work that they do. Protecting Davis-Bacon does just that.

The amendment offered by the gentleman from Iowa will not create jobs, it will not house our military, and it certainly will not result in better care and services for our veterans. All it will do is take away critical wage protections and open our workers to exploitation in a race to the bottom.

I urge my colleagues to stand behind our American workers and to stand behind our veterans and oppose this amendment. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CULBERSON. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR (Ms. FOXX). The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, I rise in strong support of the gentleman's amendment.

It is just common sense that the free market and competitive open bidding process is going to result in a savings to taxpayers. Davis-Bacon artificially drives up the cost to taxpayers at a time when we simply cannot afford it. With record debt, record deficit and at a time when all of us as stewards of the Treasury need to do everything we can to protect our constituents' hard-earned tax dollars, I strongly support the gentleman from Iowa's amendment, which is to make sure that we have a competitive bidding process in which the lowest price and, obviously, free market wages in this environment in the 21st century are going to be fair wages with good compensation and good benefits. We truly don't need to pay higher wages in an era of record debt and deficit.

I would, Madam Chairman, like to yield to the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I appreciate the gentleman from Texas for yielding.

First, in response to some of the remarks that were made that Davis-Bacon wages are based on surveys, well, technically they are based on surveys, but merit shop employers often do not answer those surveys because union organizers show up to organize their employees very shortly after that. It's not always a wise decision to turn your wage records in to the Department of Labor, because in many environments that just about guarantees union organizers coming in to try to drive the wages up more.

The statement about the cost of Davis-Bacon wages actually saving money in Katrina reconstruction, that's a new one for me. My recollection is that George Bush initially after Katrina suspended Davis-Bacon wages so that the money could be best applied to get the cleanup and then the reconstruction done down in New Orleans, in that area, under Katrina. He shortly thereafter lifted that order, so I don't know how a study could show how much money was actually saved. If my memory is correct, it never really was implemented for any length of time that would be appreciable. I don't know of a study that shows that imposed union scale Davis-Bacon wages actually saves the taxpayers money unless that study might be funded by the unions themselves.

There is no argument that this is the last remaining Jim Crow law, the law that was designed to lock Black Americans out of the union trades in New York, particularly in New York City. The vestiges of that remain today, and I think it's worthy to go back and look at a study and see what representation of the ethnic population is represented within these construction trades in places like New York City. It would be very constructive, I think, to look at that.

Also, labor is a commodity. The value of it needs to be determined by supply and demand in the marketplace, Madam Chair. And just like gold or oil or corn or beans, where I come from, you're not going to get the real wages out of that unless you let competition determine that.

And I, as an employer for all of these years, want to pay the best wages I can, I want to provide the best benefits that I can, I want to hire the best people that I can, and in doing so, your people are your company, and when you hire good people and you pay them a good wage, you get to keep them. What I set up a business model on was hiring people in a seasonal business to work 12 months out of the year, not seasonally, not going into the union hall and pulling somebody out and putting him to work for a few days and putting him back again, but saying to him, You can have a career here, and I'll give you 12-months' work for 12-months' pay, and I'll give you a benefits package.

I want to compete with that, but when the Federal Government comes in and tells you that somebody on a shovel has to be paid this and that somebody on a backhoe has to be paid this and that somebody on a motor grader has to be paid this, you will see them machine hopping during the day because they'll always be maneuvering to get on the machine that pays the highest wages, not the one that does the best for efficiency to get the job done.

I've had to go in and police that, and I've had to go in and build a spreadsheet that calculates the movement of everybody on our jobs going on in order to determine that I can comply with the Federal Government's requirement that I pay the wages that they demand and insist, instead of the simplicity of saying, Here is what I'll offer you for pay and benefits.

They've sometimes come to me and have said, What's my job?

I'll define your job for you. Help me make money, and I'll pay you for that, and I want to reward you by trying to give you enough money in benefits to keep you.

That's how free markets work. We cannot be out here setting up a union scale imposed by some people who are sitting in a backroom, which is what happens, by the way. We can't be supporting the last vestige of Jim Crow laws. We can't be letting the Federal Government decide what job categories are going to be paid what wages when we just want to put people to work and let them develop a skill and develop their trades.

So the machine hopping is something that gives me a lot of heartburn. Even if we have an actual representation of prevailing wage, it's still not representative of supply and demand because many States have passed their many Davis-Bacon laws, and the market has been so distorted that we don't today have a concept of what that cost is, Madam Chair. So I urge the adoption of my amendment.

Mr. CULBERSON. I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KILDEE. I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from Michigan is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILDEE. I come from Flint, Michigan, a working class community. I represent Flint-Saginaw-Bay City, and it's a community that's proud of the fact that in this area—and it's true across the country—the notion has been that, if you work hard, if you train yourself, if you focus on a trade or go to school, you'll be paid a wage or a salary commensurate with the contribution that you make to the work that you're doing.

We live in a time when we're seeing decreasing compensation for the value that the worker brings to the working place. Between 1945 and 1975, we saw worker productivity rise in this country by 97 percent, and we saw household income rise in that same 30-year period by 95 percent. There was some parity in the contribution that workers made and the compensation that they received. You fast-forward to the last 30-year period, and we've seen a period of economic growth and expansion, increased productivity—80 percent over the last 30 years—but in real wages, a 10 percent increase in productivity.

One of the reasons that we've seen such a drop is that we are not compensating the average workers for the quality and the work that they do and that they contribute to the highly productive society that we live in. This is yet another attempt to continue the race to the bottom, where we continue to see real wages go down and productivity continue to rise.

I have done a tremendous amount of work in local development. As a public and private citizen, I have been involved in lots and lots of construction projects involving hundreds of millions of dollars, and I will tell you one thing: there is absolutely nothing sacrificed by making sure that the people who do this important work are paid wages that are fair and that fit the marketplace. It is not only good for those families that benefit from a decent and fair wage, but it supports those local employers and those small businesses that we all talk about every day that we're trying to support.

Where does the money come from into communities that support those folks?

It comes from the fact that the workers have a decent living wage that allows them to pay their bills, set a little money aside for their families and contribute to a local economy. Davis-Bacon wages contribute to the ability for workers to be trained as well.

This is the wrong direction for this country. This is certainly the wrong direction in this particular budget connected to the work that our Nation does when what we fought for in this country was a society that rewards people for the quality and the quantity of their hard work and their training that they put to work in doing these tough construction jobs particularly. When we're already seeing private sector wages go down, we ought not as a Nation participate in this race to the bottom.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING).

The question was taken; and the Acting Chair announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Chair, I demand a recorded vote.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Iowa will be postponed.

□ 1850

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIR

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, proceedings will now resume on those amendments on which further proceedings were postponed, in the following order:

An amendment by Mr. BROUN of Georgia.

An amendment by Mr. AMODEI of Nevada.

An amendment by Mr. MORAN of Virginia.

An amendment by Mr. KING of Iowa.

The Chair will reduce to 2 minutes the time for any electronic vote after the first vote in the series.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. BROUN OF GEORGIA

The Acting CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. BROUN) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 151, noes 269, not voting 13, as follows:

[Roll No. 188]

AYES—151

Amash
Bachmann
Bachus
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Brady (TX)
Brooks (AL)
Broun (GA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Camp
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Cotton
Daines
Davis, Rodney
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Farenthold
Fincher
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Franks (AZ)
Gardner
Garrett
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Green, Gene
Griffith (VA)
Guthrie
Hall
Harris
Hensarling
Holding
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Kilmer
King (IA)
Kingston
LaMalfa
Lance
Latta
LoBiondo
Long
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Maffei
Marchant
Massie
Matheson
McCaul
McClintock
Meehan
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Miller, George
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (PA)
Neugebauer
Nolan
Olson
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Radel
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Ross
Royce
Ruiz
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sanford
Scalise
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Shuster
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stockman
Stutzman
Tiberi
Tipton
Upton
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho

NOES—269

Aderholt
Alexander
Amodei
Andrews
Barber
Barletta
Bass
Beatty
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (IN)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Calvert
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Cole
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crawford

Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farr
Fattah
Fitzpatrick
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gerlach
Gosar
Grayson
Green, Al
Griffin (AR)
Grijalva
Grimm
Gutierrez
Hahn
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Herrera Beutler
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Huffman
Israel
Issa
Johnson, E. B.
Joyce
Kaptur
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kind
King (NY)
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
Lamborn
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marino
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Meadows
Meeks
Meng
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Moore
Moran
Murphy (FL)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
O'Rourke
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peterson
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Rangel
Reed
Reichert
Richmond
Rigell
Roby
Rogers (KY)
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Runyan
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schock
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Welch
Wenstrup
Wilson (FL)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Yarmuth
Young (AK)
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—13

Becerra
Campbell
Cramer
Granger
Hastings (FL)
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Keating
Markey
McCarthy (NY)
Palazzo
Watt

□ 1917

Messrs. RIGELL, KELLY of Pennsylvania, ALEXANDER, GOSAR, GARY G. MILLER of California, BOUSTANY, HINOJOSA, RUSH and Ms. GABBARD changed their vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

Messrs. POE of Texas, GUTHRIE, JOHNSON of Ohio, HUNTER, McCAUL, OLSON and MEEHAN changed their vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. AMODEI

The Acting CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. AMODEI) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIR. This will be a 2-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 248, noes 172, not voting 13, as follows:

[Roll No. 189]

AYES—248

Aderholt
Alexander
Amodei
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Bass
Bera (CA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Calvert
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Daines
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
Denham
Dent
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Engel
Enyart
Farr
Fincher
Fleischmann
Fleming
Forbes
Foster
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallego
Garamendi
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Hahn
Hall
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Hinojosa
Honda
Horsford
Huelskamp
Huffman
Hultgren
Hurt
Israel
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Keating
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Latham
Latta
Lee (CA)
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Lynch
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
Meadows
Meehan
Meng
Messer
Mica
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Neugebauer
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Pastor (AZ)
Pearce
Perry
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Price (GA)
Radel
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rigell
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sanford
Scalise
Schneider
Schock
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (PA)
Tiberi
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Valadao
Vela
Velázquez
Walden
Walorski
Waters
Waxman
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Young (AK)
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NOES—172

Amash
Andrews
Bachmann
Barrow (GA)
Beatty
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Butterfield
Camp
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conaway
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
DeSantis
Deutch
Dingell
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Fattah
Fitzpatrick
Flores
Fortenberry
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Garcia
Grayson
Green, Al
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Hanabusa
Hartzler
Heck (WA)
Higgins
Himes
Holding
Holt
Hoyer
Hudson
Huizenga (MI)
Hunter
Issa
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Kelly (IL)
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Kuster
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Levin
Lewis
Loebsack
Lowey
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Massie
Matsui
McCollum
McDermott
McNerney
Meeks
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Moore
Moran
Murphy (FL)
Negrete McLeod
Noem
Nolan
O'Rourke
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Posey
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rangel
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (MI)
Runyan
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Stockman
Terry
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Upton
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth
Yoho

NOT VOTING—13

Becerra
Campbell
Cassidy
Granger
Gutierrez
Hastings (FL)
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Johnson (GA)
Markey
McCarthy (NY)
Palazzo
Watt

□ 1923

Mr. NOLAN changed his vote from ''aye'' to ''no.''

Ms. WATERS and Messrs. LYNCH, McINTYRE, GARRETT, and BONNER changed their vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. MORAN

The Acting CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the

gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the noes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIR. This will be a 2-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 170, noes 254, not voting 9, as follows:

[Roll No. 190]

AYES—170

Amash
Andrews
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Bera (CA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (FL)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke
Clay
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crowley
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farr
Fattah
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Garamendi
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hahn
Hanabusa
Heck (WA)
Himes
Hinojosa
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Huffman
Israel
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Kuster
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Matsui
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
Meeks
Meng
Michaud
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Nolan
O'Rourke
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Peterson
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rangel
Richmond
Roybal-Allard
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Sherman
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NOES—254

Aderholt
Alexander
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Calvert
Camp
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Cleaver
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Cook
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Cuellar
Culberson
Daines
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Farenthold
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallego
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Holding
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Lankford
Latham
Latta
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Peters (MI)
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Radel
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Ruppersberger
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Scalise
Schock
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shea-Porter
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vela
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—9

Campbell
Granger
Hastings (FL)
Higgins
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Markey
McCarthy (NY)
Watt

□ 1928

Ms. GABBARD changed her vote from ''no'' to ''aye.''

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MR. KING OF IOWA

The Acting CHAIR. The unfinished business is the demand for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) on which further proceedings were postponed and on which the ayes prevailed by voice vote.

The Clerk will redesignate the amendment.

The Clerk redesignated the amendment.

RECORDED VOTE

The Acting CHAIR. A recorded vote has been demanded.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The Acting CHAIR. This will be a 2-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 192, noes 231, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 191]

AYES—192

Aderholt
Alexander
Amash
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barr
Barton
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Calvert
Camp
Cantor
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Culberson
Daines
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Farenthold
Fincher
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gardner
Garrett
Gibbs
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Guthrie
Hall
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Holding
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
Kingston
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lankford
Latham
Latta
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Marchant
Marino
Massie
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Meadows
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mullin
Mulvaney
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Radel
Reed
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ross
Rothfus
Royce
Salmon
Sanford
Scalise
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stewart
Stockman
Stutzman
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tipton
Valadao
Wagner
Walberg
Walorski
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NOES—231

Andrews
Barber
Barletta
Barrow (GA)
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Bera (CA)
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crowley
Cuellar

Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Duffy
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farr
Fattah
Fitzpatrick
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gerlach
Gibson
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Grimm
Gutierrez
Hahn
Hanabusa
Hanna
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Huffman
Hultgren
Israel
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (NY)
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kuster
Lance
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Matheson
Matsui
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McKinley
McNerney
Meehan
Meeks
Meng
Michaud
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Nolan
O'Rourke
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Rangel
Reichert
Richmond
Roskam
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Runyan
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schock
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Speier
Stivers
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tiberi
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth
Young (AK)

NOT VOTING—10

Campbell
Diaz-Balart
Granger
Hastings (FL)
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Markey
McCarthy (NY)
Ros-Lehtinen
Watt

□ 1933

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will read.

The Clerk read as follows:

This Act may be cited as the ''Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2014''.

Mr. CULBERSON. Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise and report the bill back to the House with sundry amendments and with the recommendation that the amendments be agreed to, and that the bill, as amended, do pass.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HULTGREN) having assumed the chair, Ms. FOXX, Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2216) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2014, and for other purposes, and, pursuant to House Resolution 243, she reported the bill back to the House with sundry amendments adopted in the Committee of the Whole, with a recommendation that the amendments be adopted and that the bill, as amended, do pass.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the rule, the previous question is ordered.

Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment reported from the Committee of the Whole? If not, the Chair will put them en gros.

The amendments were agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the engrossment and third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed and read a third time, and was read the third time.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the bill?

Mr. ENYART. I am opposed in its present form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. ENYART moves to recommit the bill H.R. 2216 to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report the same back to the House forthwith with the following amendment:

Page 22, line 10, after the dollar amount, insert ''(increased by $9,200,000)''.

Page 33, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert ''(increased by $9,200,000)''.

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this amendment to H.R. 2216 to increase funding for veterans claims processors so that we can reduce the disgraceful backlog of claims waiting to be processed.

This is the final amendment to the bill, which will not kill the bill nor send it back to committee. If adopted, the bill will immediately proceed to final passage, as amended.

We have been fighting two wars for over 10 years, which has resulted in a large number of veterans returning home with both physical and mental injuries.

□ 1940

In addition, veterans who served in Vietnam and the gulf war are getting older, and many are discovering health issues that are related to their service. The result is that currently there are over 900,000 veterans' disability claims waiting to be processed. The average wait for that backlog is now 9 months.

We are talking about American heroes like Michael Boren of Energy, Illinois. Michael is a veteran in my district who was in danger of losing his home because the VA took 19 months to track down his paperwork and process his claim. Veterans like Michael are in your district, and you've heard their stories, just as I have. Too many veterans are threatened with home foreclosure, having their cars repossessed, having their credit cards cut off, all because of the VA backlog. It's shameful.

We must act to speed up the process so that disabled, honorably discharged American veterans are not waiting without income for months and years. This motion to recommit adds $9.2 million to hire 94 additional VA claims processors. This doubles the number of claims processors in the base bill. The amendment is fully offset from unobligated and unused funds and funds from military construction.

This vote serves as a lifeline to countless veterans who can no longer wait for this problem to be solved.

When I look out at this House, I look down the center aisle. I look at the right side and see my colleagues, my friends in the party of Dwight David Eisenhower; I see the party of Teddy Roosevelt; I see the party of Abraham Lincoln.

When I look at the left side, I see my friends who represent the party of Harry S. Truman; the party of Franklin Delano Roosevelt; the party of Woodrow Wilson—great wartime leaders, all.

Those great Presidents knew the meaning of commitment to the troops that we sent to defend and protect our Nation. Today, we stand in their shadows. We in Congress committed to send these brave men and women in harm's way for our country. Folks in the Active Duty service, in the Guard, and in the Reserve, they have served us honorably; they have served their commitment proudly. Now we must complete our commitment to veterans in our time.

To paraphrase President Lincoln, many of the votes we cast here in Congress will be little noted, nor long remembered. But the veterans, veterans up there in that gallery, veterans back in your district, veterans all across this Nation will remember this vote; their families will remember this vote. Today, we vote to fulfill the promise of a great Nation to those who have served that great Nation. This is a vote to serve them.

Vote ''yes'' on this final amendment to help veterans get the benefits they have earned and they deserve. Vote ''yes'' on this motion to recommit.

When I step down from this podium, I will walk up that center aisle, not to the right, nor to the left, but up that center aisle, and cast my vote ''yes'' for this amendment, because it is for the veterans and for our great Nation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair reminds Members to refrain from referring to occupants in the gallery.

Mr. CULBERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am opposed to the motion to recommit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CULBERSON. Our third-highest priority in the Constitution is to provide for the common defense. This bill, more than any other, has been done in a bipartisan way; this bill more than any other is vitally important to the peace of mind, to the quality of life of our men and women in uniform when they're on Active Duty standing on the walls of Rome defending our freedom and protecting us and putting themselves in harm's way, and the peace of mind and comfort of their families back in the United States and around the world where they're deployed, and when they become veterans and move into the veterans system.

We in this subcommittee, more than any other in the House, have been bipartisan, arm-in-arm, doing everything in our power to help ensure that no man or woman wearing the uniform of the United States should ever worry for one moment about the quality of their life, about the quality of their health care. We think of ourselves as the peace-of-mind committee for the men and women in uniform defending the United States. There's been no more bipartisan bill than this one, there's been no more open bill than this one, there's been no more open process for amendment than the appropriations process.

It is possible, in fact, for you to walk down here on the floor and with a yellow notepad and a pen write an amendment and walk down and hand it to the Clerk at any point during the debate on this bill and have it considered by the House. Yet we got this amendment 3 minutes and 45 seconds before the debate began. It reflects so poorly on the House of Representatives for the minority to present an amendment that we would have happily worked with you on to have accomplished in a bill in an amendment form had you just brought it down to the floor.

In fact, we have given the Veterans Affairs Secretary everything that he's asked for. The Veterans Administration has been given massive increases in funding to handle the claims backlog. In fact, Congressman KINGSTON of Georgia just offered an amendment, which the House has approved, which will cut the salary of the senior leadership of the VA by 25 percent if they don't meet their own deadlines on reducing the backlog.

The United States Congress has literally done everything. We've given them every dollar, everything they have possibly asked for. We've offered you every opportunity to just walk down here and amend the bill, yet you give it to us 3 minutes and 45 seconds before the debate begins. This ought to be exhibit A of why we need a rule in the House that all amendments ought to be published at least 24 hours in advance on the Internet, especially a motion to recommit as embarrassing, frankly, as this one.

I am happy to yield my time to the chairman of the Veterans Committee, Mr. MILLER.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I thank the chairman very much for yielding his time. And I do think it's important that the Members know that the committee under both Democrat and Republican chairmen have given every dollar, every person, every piece of equipment, every software that the Department of Veterans Affairs has asked for. And to do this at the 12th hour is not the way to make a difference in what we are trying to do.

Our committee, the authorizing committee, has made it their number one focus; and Members here know this. MIKE MICHAUD and I together have worked with our committee members and other Members across the floor trying to make sure that the backlog is taken care of. This is purely a political stunt and not one that we should vote for.

Mr. CULBERSON. I urge Members to defeat this motion to recommit and vote ''no.''

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. ENYART. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, this 5-minute vote on the motion to recommit will be followed by a 5-minute vote on the passage of the bill.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 198, noes 227, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 192]

AYES—198

Andrews
Barber
Barrow (GA)
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Bera (CA)
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Bustos
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Cartwright
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Connolly
Conyers
Cooper
Costa
Courtney
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Deutch
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Edwards
Ellison
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farr
Fattah
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hahn
Hanabusa
Hastings (FL)
Heck (WA)
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Huffman
Israel
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
Kirkpatrick
Kuster
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Matheson
Matsui
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
Meeks
Meng
Michaud
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Murphy (FL)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Nolan
O'Rourke
Owens
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Posey
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Rangel
Richmond
Roybal-Allard
Ruiz
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, David
Serrano
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Welch
Wilson (FL)
Yarmuth

NOES—227

Aderholt
Alexander
Amash
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barletta
Barr
Barton
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Bonner
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Calvert
Camp
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Cassidy
Chabot
Chaffetz
Coble
Coffman
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Cook
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Culberson
Daines
Davis, Rodney
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Diaz-Balart
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Farenthold
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Holding
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Joyce
Kelly (PA)
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Lankford
Latham
Latta
LoBiondo
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lummis
Marchant
Marino
Massie
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (PA)
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Perry
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Price (GA)
Radel
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Royce

Runyan
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sanford
Scalise
Schock
Schweikert
Scott, Austin
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tipton
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NOT VOTING—8

Campbell
Granger
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Markey
McCarthy (NY)
Watt
Wolf

□ 1955

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the passage of the bill.

Under clause 10 of rule XX, the yeas and nays are ordered.

This will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 421, nays 4, not voting 8, as follows:

[Roll No. 193]

YEAS—421

Aderholt
Alexander
Amash
Amodei
Andrews
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Beatty
Becerra
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Bonner
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Calvert
Camp
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Cicilline
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gosar
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Graves (MO)
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Gutierrez
Hahn
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holding
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Latta
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
Matsui
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Meng
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Moore
Moran
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
O'Rourke
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Quigley
Radel
Rahall
Rangel
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Ruppersberger
Rush
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schock
Schrader
Schwartz
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (FL)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (FL)
Young (IN)

NAYS—4

Bass
Conyers
Miller, George
Nolan

NOT VOTING—8

Campbell
Granger
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Markey
McCarthy (NY)
Watt
Wolf

□ 2004

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION,

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday afternoon, June 4, 2013, I was required to return to my congressional district in Houston, Texas, in order to attend a memorial service for four members of the Houston Fire Department who lost their lives in the line of duty on Friday, May 31, 2013. This tragedy was the deadliest incident in terms of the numbers of firefighters lost in the history of the Houston Fire Department. As the senior Member of the Houston congressional delegation and a senior Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, attending the memorial service was directly related to my representational, legislative, and committee responsibilities.

Because of this excused absence I was not present for rollcall votes 188 through 193.

Had I been present I would have voted as follows:

1. On rollcall No. 188, I would have voted "no."

Broun Amendment, which eliminates funding for an on-going NATO headquarters project (a cut of $38,513,000) and applies the savings to the spending reduction account.

2. On rollcall No. 189, I would have voted "no."

Amodei Amendment, which takes overtime funding from 41 VA regional offices and concentrates it in the 15 offices with the worst backlog.

3. On rollcall No. 190, I would have voted "aye."

Moran Amendment, which language prohibiting the use of funds to construct, renovate or expand any facility in the United States to house any individual detained at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for the purposes of detention or imprisonment.

4. On rollcall No. 191, I would have voted "no."

King (IA) Amendment, which prohibits the use of funds to implement, administer, or enforce the Davis-Bacon Act, which requires federal contractors to pay locally prevailing wages

5. On rollcall No. 192, I would have voted "aye."

Democratic Motion to Recommit H.R. 2216.

6. On rollcall No. 193, I would have voted "aye."

Final Passage of H.R. 2216, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2014.

EXTREME WEATHER

(Mr. TONKO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, as hurricane season begins this week, there is no better time for Congress to refocus its efforts on better protecting our coastline communities and the more than 123 million people that live in them from extreme weather events.

In the wake of hurricanes like Katrina, Rita, Sandy, and Irene, which took lives and destroyed property in my district, extreme weather preparedness should be an issue that both