

Weber (TX)	Wilson (FL)	Yoho
Webster (FL)	Wilson (SC)	Young (AK)
Welch	Wittman	Young (IA)
Wenstrup	Womack	Zeldin
Westerman	Woodall	Zinke
Westmoreland	Yarmuth	
Williams	Yoder	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Rice (SC)

NOT VOTING—45

Aderholt	Flores	Rohrabacher
Barton	Granger	Rush
Beyer	Grijalva	Sanchez, Loretta
Blumenauer	Hinojosa	Scott, David
Boyle, Brendan	Jackson Lee	Sires
F.	Kelly (IL)	Slaughter
Brady (PA)	Kirkpatrick	Speier
Brady (TX)	Lipinski	Stutzman
Brown (FL)	Lujan Grisham	Tiberi
Calvert	(NM)	Van Hollen
Capuano	Maloney,	Vela
Collins (NY)	Carolyn	Walker
Doyle, Michael	Marino	Waters, Maxine
F.	Meeks	Whitfield
Edwards	Olson	Young (IN)
Fattah	Pelosi	
Fincher	Poe (TX)	

□ 1858

So (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and 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. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall vote Nos. 153 and 154. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on both.

□ 1900

HONORING THE LIFE OF
CONGRESSMAN RAY THORNTON

(Mr. HILL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today with my colleagues to honor the life of Congressman Ray Thornton, who was a pillar in Arkansas politics and a stalwart advocate and voice for the improvement of education in our great State of Arkansas.

Serving six terms in Congress, for over 23 years, Congressman Thornton served in two different congressional districts, the fourth and the second. Ray was committed to the people of Arkansas and supporting Arkansas ideals on the political stage.

His distinguished career included service in the United States Navy during the Korean war, leadership as president of both Arkansas State University and the University of Arkansas, an 8-year term on the Arkansas Supreme Court, and appointment as the first chairman of the Arkansas Lottery.

In 2013, Congressman Thornton donated his personal and professional papers to the University of Arkansas.

Though he will be greatly missed by many throughout our State, his countless contributions and legacy will live on and serve as an example of statesmanship and public service for all Arkansans.

HONORING THE LIFE OF RABBI
HERBERT BAUMGUARD

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in remembrance of Rabbi Herbert Baumguard, who passed away this past Friday, at the age of 95.

Rabbi Baumguard founded Temple Beth Am, which is an important institution in my congressional district that has brought the south Florida Jewish community together for over 60 years.

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, Rabbi Baumguard served as an assistant to a chaplain in World War II. He credited that experience with his motivation for becoming a rabbi.

One of Rabbi Baumguard's strongest ideals was the continuing friendship and alliance with the State of Israel. The Rabbi was committed to not only strengthening our ties with our great ally, but to seeing that the United States continues to support and defend the Jewish state, which is an idea that I shared with him.

I am so honored and privileged to have had the opportunity to represent Temple Beth Am and to experience all that Rabbi Baumguard has done to improve south Florida. May his memory be a blessing.

HONORING THE SERVICE OF CHIEF
DELL URBAN

(Mr. DOLD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOLD. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Dell Urban, the chief of the North Chicago Fire Department, who is retiring after spending more than 25 years on the force. Ms. Urban is the first female fire chief in Lake County, and one of only two female fire chiefs in the State of Illinois.

As fire chief, Ms. Urban was responsible for saving countless lives and did her duty protecting the community of North Chicago. We should all aspire to be as brave as the firemen who lay down their lives each and every day to ensure our safety.

In addition to performing her duties, Ms. Urban has been a mentor and a friend to many firefighters throughout her time as chief, and she is leaving the station far better off than before she was chief.

I want to thank Ms. Urban for her service and wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

FIREARMS TRANSFER
IMPROVEMENT ACT

(Mr. GUINTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUINTA. Madam Speaker, the Firearms Transfer Improvement Act,

which I introduced in Congress, would provide a significant boost to New Hampshire gun dealers, nearly all of them small-business owners, as well as the Granite State's tourism industry and larger economy.

At its foundation, this bill is meant to protect every American's right to bear arms, an essential freedom that is as important as it ever was.

My bill would extend the same Federal law that allows interstate long gun purchasing to handgun purchases. For instance, a Vermonter could purchase a handgun in New Hampshire, where no sales tax exists, and transport it home, as long as he or she follows his or her State's gun laws.

This bill would be a boon for States like New Hampshire that, in addition to enjoying greater Second Amendment freedom, would also enjoy greater economic freedom. Granite Staters stand to benefit immensely, as do sporting enthusiasts around the country.

I would like to thank the 18 original cosponsors for their support of this necessary legislation.

POTENTIAL DRAWDOWN OF LAND
FORCES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. COMSTOCK). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from New York (Mr. GIBSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GIBSON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include supporting material on the subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. GIBSON. Madam Speaker, tonight I am speaking to gain support for H.R. 4534. This is the POSTURE Act. It stops the administration's drawdown of our land forces, the United States Marine Corps and the United States Army.

This is a bipartisan bill, myself and 52 others, 52 cosponsors, including 42 Republicans and 10 Democrats. I am proud to say that we are coming together to make sure that we keep our land forces strong.

This is also a bicameral bill. The language of this bill has also been introduced in the United States Senate.

Madam Speaker, the predicate here is a belief in peace through strength, a belief that what we want to do is deter potential adversaries; and to do that, we certainly need to restore our capability in our Armed Forces, deterrence really being capability and will.

Tonight I am focused in on the POSTURE Act. Of course, Madam Speaker, the coauthors and I, we certainly share deep concern for the entire joint force, but today we are particularly focused in on the land forces.

You will hear, across the evening here, five general points. They are:

Number one, that the drawdown plan currently from the administration is planned to continue into 2018, for several more years here; and at the culmination of that, our land forces will actually be at pre-World War II levels.

Given the very volatile, uncertain, ambiguous international environment that we live in, we believe, the authors, that this is very high risk; and, really, we want to change that and, essentially, preserve 67,000 troops in end strength in the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps. That is number one.

The second point is the assumptions that were made, Madam Speaker, when the administration initially made the decision on the drawdown, we believe that those assumptions are no longer valid. There has been much change in the world in the last several years, and you will hear some of that this evening.

The third point, which is very important, is that, with our land forces, this is not like a light switch where we can turn it on, turn it off, turn it back on. If we end up standing down these 67,000 troops, it could take 3 to 4 years to reconstitute that force level; and given the uncertainty we have in this international environment, we think that that is too much risk for us to take on.

Madam Speaker, the fourth point, and here I will speak from my personal experience of 29 years in the military, is that this planned drawdown also has consequence for our servicemen and -women. It has, certainly, consequence in terms of the op tempo, the operational tempo, of how many deployments they will go on and for how long, the duration of those deployments.

And also, we know the risk. The enemy's weapon of choice in this war is the improvised explosive device, and we know that that has led to significant challenge with traumatic brain injuries and also post-traumatic stress.

Certainly, there is wide bipartisan support in this Chamber to care for our servicemen and -women and their families, and that is why these bipartisan authors are also very concerned about end strength. That is point 4.

The fifth point is this: when we preserve this—because I believe we are gaining momentum and, ultimately, I like our chances; we are going to get this into law—it is very important that this end strength come with the necessary resources so that we do not hollow out this force.

So, Madam Speaker, we are going to have a series of speakers now, my co-authors on the bill. I want to begin with my original coauthor, and he is the highest ranking enlisted man to ever serve in this Chamber. He is a great American hero, TIM WALZ. He is a Democrat from Minnesota.

In 1989, he earned the title of Nebraska Citizen Soldier of the Year. After deployment to Italy with his Guard unit, as part of Operation En-

during Freedom, Sergeant Major WALZ retired from the Army National Guard and resumed teaching as a geography teacher and a football coach at Mankato West Senior High School.

He is a member of the Armed Services Committee, and he is also a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ), my good colleague and friend.

Mr. WALZ. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend from New York. It is a phrase we sometimes throw around in here without a lot of authenticity behind it, but I can tell you, in this case, a gentleman who served this Nation three decades in uniform and has had a distinguished career here in Congress, I am proud to stand with you.

I think you heard the gentleman's comments on why we think now is not the right time to draw down this land force, and I say that with both of us coming out of that force.

The size of the force this Nation needs should not be predicated by a plan that is outdated. Since the time this plan was written and put into effect: the rise of ISIS, China has built a new island in the South China Sea and is landing aircraft on it now, and a belligerent Russia.

But more than that, we have seen the use of the military force as a deterrent, not just to aggression. We have seen it as a peaceful use, whether it be in Haiti to respond to natural disasters or to respond to Ebola in West Africa. The best trained, the most efficient and the most ready force to be able to use our diplomacy and our humanitarian assets is this land force.

I think for many of us, we were concerned about this, but this is not ideologically driven. The gentleman and I coauthored a piece of legislation that created the National Commission on the Future of the Army.

We said: Let's let the data speak for itself. If the experts can take this in and assess that this force is enough to do what needs to be done according to the strategic plan of this Nation by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the best thinkers, then that is the way it should be.

But they did not come back with that. They came about some alarming things that they talked about, and one of them, I think it is very clear we are heading down the wrong path, stripping it of manpower.

There is a belief in this Nation that we can solve all problems, especially security problems, with the use of technology. Our technological advantage is a huge positive force, but it will not be on the ground with Ebola. It will not be there when we have to have that defending force.

□ 1915

As everyone in this Chamber knows, 15 years of war puts an incredible stress on that. The gentleman used a great analogy.

He talked about turning on and off the lights. I use the one that I think a

lot of people think: This is like running the car out of gas. If we just need more, we will put more gas in it.

That is not true. It is running the car out of oil, which causes all kinds of problems. If we do not keep the force where it is at, keep it trained, and keep it ready to go, we will not be able to carry out those missions.

I would like to highlight a couple of other things that the Commission said about the integration of the National Guard to the active components and the use of the National Guard as an operational reserve, not a strategic reserve.

Those of us who lived through the years where the National Guard was an afterthought and we practiced artillery training with toilet paper rolls instead of real charges because we didn't have the capacity to train, that is the surest way to make sure our force is not ready to go. It is not a good use of taxpayer dollars, and it is simply immoral to train America's young warriors without the full capacity of what they need.

So I think, for many of us, this is not only a national security issue, it is a smart fiscal issue. We have paid dearly with treasure and blood to have this force. I can tell you, if the force shrinks too much—and we have seen this happen—the rotations happen very quickly.

All the speakers you are going to hear tonight, Madam Speaker, are going to tell you about this. It becomes very difficult both from the personal side for them to manage their relationships, but also the professional side of soldiering. You can't get to the schools you need. You can't develop the wider breadth that you need for all contingencies.

We have become very, very good at small missions that the same people get rotated into without the ability to look elsewhere. So as we pivot to the Pacific, those are new skill sets that need to be incorporated in.

What the gentleman is asking for is let's just pause in the drawdown, let's keep the force where the Commission and the GAO says it needs to be, let's give the force the ability to rotate out and to do what needs to be done to have them get back and ready to get in the fight again in a way that makes sense. We can do that.

Again, I want to be very clear. Those critics who say that we are asking to build up the military, we are just asking to stop a drawdown that we think gets dangerously close to putting this Nation in a predicament where it cannot carry out the missions that are asked of it.

We in this Chamber and the American public have a moral responsibility to never put a warrior in that position and never put those commanders in that position.

So I want to thank the gentleman for bringing this forward. I want to thank him for being willing to champion this forward. We know this is about educating not only our colleagues, but the

American public. It is about having a debate.

I think the gentleman from New York brought up a critical point. Numbers without the ability to train, equip, and do what is necessary to get them to the highest level of readiness is probably worse than nothing, and that is not what we are asking for.

I think, again, to highlight the gentleman's commitment to this, he is looking at ways to pay for it. He is looking at ways to make it work: repealing sequestration, pursuing waste, eliminating programs at the Pentagon, encouraging and assisting our allies and partners to beef up what they need to do to beef up, and ensure the next President has the force capable to not only address current, but future threats. That is our responsibility.

So I am proud to stand with the gentleman on the POSTURE Act. I think it is smart policy. It is predicated on data. It is predicated on decades of personal experience from the gentleman from New York and speakers you are going to hear coming up. It is what the thinkers are telling us.

Again, I think it does come back to the gentleman's opening comments. Those adversaries who think that this is the time to do something with this Nation need to be sent a strong message that we are as strong as ever, our commitment is as strong as ever, and our force will be as it always has been: the best trained and the best fighting force the world has ever seen. We are just asking to give them the numbers to do their job.

So, Madam Speaker, I would encourage my colleagues to take a look at this, to get on board, and to talk with the gentleman, myself, and the other cosponsors of this.

Let's put that next President in a position to be able to secure this Nation, to be able to forward project American power in the name of humanitarian or human rights, and continue to give our young warriors what they need.

Mr. GIBSON. I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, you just heard, I think, in really compelling terms and you saw witness to why it is that we have the finest fighting force in the world.

What separates us from the rest of the world is our noncommissioned officer corps. This is an incredible collection of professionals that provide advice, analysis, and recommendations. Really, I would put our noncommissioned officer corps up against any other noncommissioned officer corps in the world.

I want to say, beyond that, he is a phenomenal Representative here in the U.S. House. I want to thank the gentleman for that tremendous testimony and for his great leadership.

I now want to turn to another great warrior, Representative STEVE RUSSELL. STEVE RUSSELL is, Madam Speaker, an Airborne Ranger. He has served in airborne, light, and mechanized infantry assignments. His deployments

include deployment to Kosovo, Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Madam Speaker, in 2003, then-Lieutenant Colonel STEVE RUSSELL commanded the task force in Iraq that was instrumental in the hunt and capture of Saddam Hussein.

He is in his first term. He is already off to an amazing start. He is a member of the Armed Services Committee.

I yield to the gentleman from the State of Oklahoma, Mr. STEVE RUSSELL.

Mr. RUSSELL. Madam Speaker, I want to thank my brother, combat infantryman, warrior, and colleague from New York (Mr. GIBSON) for his leadership in this effort.

Madam Speaker, in 1940, our Nation faced tough decisions. Lawmakers in this Chamber debated over our constitutional requirement to defend our Republic.

Faced with a decade of depression, declining budgets, and enormous domestic needs, President Roosevelt recognized that the Nation was woefully unprepared to defend herself, given the alarming developments in Asia and Europe the previous 2 years.

Congress acted, and, although assured we could stay out of the war, this body passed the unprecedented Selective Service Act of 1940 to increase our defensive posture.

While some would call it prescient or even timely, we were still woefully unprepared for the horrific attacks on our naval, land, and air forces in 1941. When the blow fell, we had for the first time a sizeable forward-deployed force based in the Philippine Islands in December 1941.

That Allied force of 150,000 soldiers fought bravely for 5 months until their medical supplies, food, and, finally, ammunition were exhausted, prompting the largest surrender of U.S. forces in American history.

Tens of thousands of these Allied soldiers died in brutal captivity, all simply because our Nation could not get to them. While we had future capacity, we had forfeited our defensive posture through cost-cutting policies the previous decade and we had exhausted our time.

As unprepared as we were in 1940, it could have been even worse had the President and Congress not acted when they did. But here is something to ponder: our current land forces are actually 30 percent smaller today than they were in 1940 when you compare them to a percentage of our per capita population. If we lived today in an atmosphere of peace, maybe we could take such gambles.

Instead, we see Russians reigniting the cold war, Iranians destabilizing the Middle East, North Koreans firing nuclear missiles with the aim to range the United States, and Islamic jihadist death-cult extremists committing acts of barbarity akin to the Middle Ages. We also see tensions rising with our trading partner, China, and the seeds of potential unrest in the Pacific.

What does the President and this Congress intend to do if we do not act to prepare for this dangerous world? This year it would cut the United States Army by 30,000 more soldiers and our Marines by another 8,000. Instead, our bipartisan answer to these cuts in this Congress is a resounding no.

Whatever savings we might imagine we safeguard, whatever tension we may imagine we could trim, whatever goodwill we deceive ourselves of that would go after, we assuredly would be eroded by an unexpected attack on our Nation as she has voluntarily chained herself down into a weakened condition.

Rather than slacken our posture, we must slacken our chains. We stand together with much work ahead, but this bipartisan effort is a refusal to see our Nation further diminished.

As we pass this measure into law, let's do it with the echo of these sobering words from novelist, historian, and Nobel Laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a survivor of torture and tyranny:

I would like to call upon America to be more careful with its trust and prevent those who because of shortsightedness and still others out of self-interest from falsely using the struggle for peace and for social justice to lead you down a false road. Because they are trying to weaken you. They are trying to disarm your strong and magnificent country in the face of this fearful threat. I call upon you ordinary working men of America. Do not let yourselves become weak.

Pass the POSTURE Act and prevent some horrific blow from berthing in our future.

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. GIBSON for his outstanding leadership on this issue.

Mr. GIBSON. I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. RUSSELL).

What we heard, Madam Speaker, just moments ago here is what I mentioned at the outset. We were talking about the changed assumptions when the administration first made these decisions.

Of course, they were working based on the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, the 2013 Strategic Choices and Management Review, and also the 2014 QDR.

Madam Speaker, I think we just heard very persuasive argumentation how just in the last several years so much has changed and the reason why this Chamber is coming together in a bipartisan way to move forward on this POSTURE Act.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to turn to Representative RENEE ELLMERS. RENEE is not on the Committee on Armed Services, but this lady works incredibly hard for our Nation and for our servicemen and -women. She studies all the time. I have had countless discussions with her.

She is always wanting to know the details to make sure that the servicemen and -women who serve at Fort Bragg get all the resources that they need. She takes their combat readiness so very seriously because she knows that their lives are on the line there.

Fort Bragg could not ask for a stronger advocate. I am very impressed and am very thankful for her support in going above and beyond, not being on the committee and jurisdiction, to be here tonight and, really, to make her voice be heard all throughout this land on why we need to get behind the POSTURE Act.

So I will just say last before I turn it over to her that part of what I know that Representative ELLMERS is working on is a very important supporting element for our land forces, the 440th, which is based out of Fort Bragg and Pope Army Air Base. I know from firsthand experience this is an incredible outfit. We are concerned about some decisions that are being taken here.

I yield to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. ELLMERS).

Mrs. ELLMERS of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr. GIBSON. I just want to start right off by saying, Madam Speaker, that our colleague, Mr. GIBSON, has been a tireless voice for our military and certainly has been a resource for me and has always been more than open and honest with me when it comes to decisions that are facing our military and national security.

Again, I just want to thank the gentleman for his service and, also, for coming to Washington to serve our country yet again, to be such an advocate for the military, and to be such a support for the rest of us who are trying to help in that capacity as well.

I am here tonight to discuss in this Special Order the introduction of the POSTURE Act, and I thank the gentleman for this great piece of legislation.

The POSTURE Act is an important piece of legislation that will prevent further troop reductions and improve military readiness. As the Representative of Fort Bragg based in North Carolina, I have the unique perspective to see how this troop drawdown is directly impacting our national security.

It is my top priority to ensure that we restore our military's end strength not only to serve as a deterrent, but also so that our military can appropriately and effectively respond to any threat represented to our country or our allies. The POSTURE Act will ensure that our troops are ready and prepared to defend our Nation at a moment's notice.

I would also like to thank Mr. GIBSON for his help raising awareness about the serious issues facing Fort Bragg, including the deactivation of the 440th Airlift Wing.

The 440th Airlift Wing provides unparalleled support to Fort Bragg paratroopers, more specifically, the famed 82nd Airborne's Global Response Force, a unit Mr. GIBSON knows all too well, as he was the commander of this force just a few years back.

Because of the potential deactivation of the 440th Airlift Wing, I have been having this very discussion about maintaining military readiness and

maintaining sufficient troop levels for the last 2-plus years.

This certainly is not the first time I have stepped foot onto the House floor to rail against the Air Force's ill-conceived decision to deactivate the 440th. In fact, I have stood in this very spot and stressed my concerns about the threats their decision poses to the readiness of the Fort Bragg paratroopers.

Unfortunately, what I thought was going to happen is indeed taking place as we speak. While the Air Force has promised they would continue to provide necessary airlift support for Fort Bragg, the Air Force is already falling well short of this promise.

□ 1930

Fort Bragg aims to complete 10,000 jumps a month to prepare troops for combat, but the Air Force's decision to prematurely hollow out this wing has prevented them from meeting this jump goal. Last month, only 6,100 paratroopers jumped from Air Force planes. In fact, the Air Force has even fallen short on Fort Bragg's 8,000-jump minimum—a number they consider to be their threshold for proficiency.

This is yet another consequence and, unfortunately, it is a concrete example of how drawdown can and will affect military readiness and training. Not only have I met with Fort Bragg leadership, but I have also met with our Nation's top military officials and still, to this day, I do not understand why the Air Force insists on making decisions based on zero strategic merit.

To make matters worse, deactivation of the 440th is happening at a time when the 18th Airborne Corps was recently called upon to lead the fight against the Islamic extremist group ISIS. Members of the 18th Airborne Corps are set to deploy this summer. Meanwhile, we are on the track to have the smallest size Army since the end of World War II.

Russia has become increasingly aggressive and China's military presence continues to grow in southeast Asia—all the while our President insists on drawing down our military and cutting its funding. This is not the time to be cutting our military. This is the time to strengthen it.

Mr. GIBSON's bill ensures that we will have appropriate end strength to keep our Nation and our allies safe and secure. I look forward to continuing to work with Mr. GIBSON and standing by him in this capacity, as I believe that strengthening our military is one of the most important issues facing Congress to date.

Mr. GIBSON. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman. I want to thank her for her strong voice, and I want to thank her for the attention to detail that she puts into this. This is so critically important. It is very instrumental in the momentum that we have had—your great voice, your staff's hard work, and your hard work.

We are going to continue to push forward with this with the POSTURE Act,

and continue to make sure that the entire installation at Fort Bragg has the necessary resources to deliver and to get its mission done and to look after and take care of its servicemen and -women, those paratroopers, and also the families.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from California (Mr. KNIGHT). Representative KNIGHT is also a veteran of our Armed Forces. He was born at Edwards Air Force Base in Antelope Valley, California. He served in the United States Army from 1985 to 1987. He was a track systems mechanic in Freiburg, Germany. When his tour ended, he served in the United States Army Reserve. His total military service spanned from 1985 to 1993. He is a member of the House Armed Services Committee. Also, within his district, he has Air Force Plant 42 and the Edwards Air Force Base.

Mr. KNIGHT. Madam Speaker, I thank Mr. GIBSON for taking a leadership role in making sure that the military has a voice, and that is exactly what he has done in his tenure here in Congress.

I rise in support of H.R. 4534. The POSTURE Act is not just something that we are asking for. It is basically the bare necessities. We are getting down to the limits.

I can say, just on personal experience, when I enlisted in 1985 as a young person graduating high school and enlisting into the Army, I expected that we had such a great military and we had all of these things that were going to help me in my endeavors. As I went to Germany, my job was if something happened, if the Russians were going to come over, we were supposed to guard what was known as the Fulda Gap. I know that anyone who has ever served in the Army in the '80s knows what the Fulda Gap is. It was basically that line where we were going to stop the Russian Army.

Unfortunately, they told us that we were going to be outrun about 11 to 1 at that time from the Russian Army. That is not something that an 18-year-old wants to know, is that the very first assignment that might happen in the cold war is you are going to go to a spot and you are going to be up against an 11-to-1 army. At that time, we had about 781,000 active Army folks.

If we fast forward to today, we are sending people in rotations every 12 months or every 18 months. We are sending these people two, three, or four different rotations during their 4- or 6-year enlistments, and we have such a smaller active Army. I know that now folks out there will be talking about the total Army structure and the total structure. I think that is great that we have the Reserves and National Guard as part of the total structure. I believe in that. I think that is something that absolutely should happen.

But if we are just doing apples to apples from 1986 to today, we go from about 780,000 to less than 500,000. That is getting down to a point where, can

we fight on two fronts, can we help, can we do all of the missions that the Army has done for the last 200 years?

I would say that we are getting down to that point where if we don't pass the POSTURE Act, we will go underneath that level and we will not be able to send our warriors into combat and into humanitarian situations with our best effort, with our best foot forward. I would say that this is the absolute—the absolute—end to where we should draw down.

Let's look at what we are looking at today. We are not looking at some of the larger countries, but we are also looking at rogue states. Russia and China, obviously, are out there and they are, obviously, doing things that we keep our eye on. Their technology has advanced, their amount of money that they spend on the military has jumped dramatically over the last 20 years. Some of the things that they are bringing forward are as technologically advanced as we have.

I would say that if we went back 20 years, we would never say that. We would say technologically we are ahead every step of the way. Today we can't say that. Today we also have rogue nations and rogue leaders out there that want to do things to us and to our allies.

So I say at a time where we are drawing down and continuing to draw down, where we have these types of rogue nations, where we have these types of superpowers out there, and we have these types of groups that want to do bad things to us and to our allies, is this actually the time that we should draw down to an unsafe level?

I would like to thank Mr. GIBSON for everything that he has done in his tenure here in Congress and what he has done for the United States of America because, honestly, he is a true hero. But in this regard, he is trying to unite all of Congress behind what he has believed and what he has done for his entire life.

I think that Congress should listen, I think that Congress should say, yes, we absolutely have these levels, and we can't go below them. In fact, as we are watching everything that is happening on the news on a daily basis, we would say that maybe those levels are too low, too. So I would like to thank Mr. GIBSON for his leadership.

Mr. GIBSON. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I thank him for his service to our Nation, and also thank him for his great work on the House Armed Services Committee. He is truly making a difference, and his voice here tonight is very compelling and very significant.

Madam Speaker, I am now going to recap and move to close. I appreciate very much the time in a busy schedule and colleagues here tonight. We are here tonight, again, for H.R. 4534, the POSTURE Act, which stops the Obama administration's drawdown of our land forces—our Army and our Marine Corps.

As I mentioned, this is a bipartisan bill—myself and 52 others here in this Chamber, including 42 Republicans and 10 Democrats, led so ably by Sergeant Major Retired Representative TIM WALZ, a Democrat from Minnesota.

I also want to say that Chairman TURNER was not able to be here today, but he has been instrumental in not only help craft this, but actually help build support for it for these past several months.

As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, tonight you heard five points why it is so important that we put the POSTURE Act into law and that we stop this drawdown.

In the first point we gave some historical figures and some context of where we are today. We know that at present our land forces are about at the same size that we were on the 11th of September of 2001. Of course, during the surge, we saw a ramp-up of our land forces, and now we have seen a re-setting of that where we are about at 11th of September of 2001 levels.

However, the plan now from the administration is to continue that drawdown all the way down to pre-World War II levels. That would be done by 2018. That takes an additional 67,000 troops out of the formations.

Madam Speaker, we heard, I think, some very significant testimony tonight from some of the speakers. We know that we have senior leaders in our Armed Forces now that have described this as a very serious risk, very significant risk. And you also heard from Representative WALZ when he talked about the Commission on the Future of the Army, which Representative WALZ, a humble man, was actually the author for that, the brain for that. We are here today because of his work on that score.

The results of that commission, I believe, Madam Speaker, really need to be paid attention to. It was here that not only were we able to get a better understanding of this risk, but also we helped bring together all components of the Army—the regular Army, the National Guard, and the Army Reserve. The Commission on the Future of the Army helped.

I also want to reinforce how important leadership is—our Chief of Staff of the Army, our Secretary of the Army, our Acting Secretary of the Army right now. They have put a major priority on really pulling together everyone that serves in the Army. The same goes for our Secretary of the Navy and for our Commandant of the Marine Corps because this is truly a team effort all the way across. That commission helped chart the way forward.

Madam Speaker, the General Accounting Office, the GAO's report that came out just last week, documented what our research has also shown over these several months. That is that there is just too much risk in continuing this drawdown to pre-World War II levels. That was point one.

In point two, we talked about the assumptions—we heard from all the

speakers. Particularly, Mr. RUSSELL focused in on that—how much of the world has changed. We can understand why the administration brought forward an argument back initially, but so much has changed since that time. It is clear to all of us that we need to pay attention to that and to adopt the POSTURE Act.

We also pointed out this evening that this is not like a light switch. It is not something that we can turn on and turn off. If we decide to move forward with the 67,000 troops, taking them out of the formations, we know that we are looking at 3 to 4 years just to get back to where we are today, Madam Speaker. That would, I think, really signal to our potential adversaries the wrong message.

The fourth point is—and we heard from a couple of the speakers—how important it is that we have the right size formations because that impacts on how often they get sent over into the combat zone and how long they stay. All of this has impacts on families, it has impacts on traumatic brain injury potential, and also posttraumatic stress. That is certainly something that this Chamber is absolutely unified in doing everything we can to support our servicemen and -women. By enacting the POSTURE Act, we are also supporting our currently serving members and our veterans.

The last point—and this has been really made very clear to us by all the leadership in both the Army and the Marine Corps—is how important it is that by preserving this end strength, it has to come with the necessary resources so that they are manned, equipped, and trained, and that we look towards the modernization of the force and look towards the future.

We have heard from the Congressional Budget Office, the CBO. The CBO initially assesses this at \$600 million. We understand that there may be a new assessment coming forward shortly. But as was also mentioned by Sergeant Major Walz, Representative WALZ, our committee is also very keenly going through the budget, a budget of over \$600 billion, when you look at the Department of Defense and Department of Energy, the Overseas Contingency Fund. We are looking for ways to make sure we do this in the best way possible for the taxpayer.

Madam Speaker, I include for the RECORD a series of letters of support that we are getting from the Association of the United States Army, the National Guard Association, and the Reserve Officers Association. We deeply appreciate their support.

ASSOCIATION OF THE
UNITED STATES ARMY,
Arlington, Virginia, 3 March 2016.

Hon. CHRIS GIBSON,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. GIBSON: On behalf of the members of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA), I write to support your introduction of H.R. 4534, the "Protecting Our Security Through Utilizing Right-Sized End-

Strength Act of 2016” or the “POSTURE Act.” At a time when our Army is confronting growing threats and increasing operational demands, it would be wise to pause the current budget-driven force reductions and allow the next administration time to assess land force capabilities and needs before determining troop levels.

Under current plans, the Regular Army is expected to fall to 475,000 Soldiers by 1 October 2016, and then further decrease to 450,000 Soldiers by 1 October 2018. These same plans will also reduce the end strength of our Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Such a reduction in our landpower capability does not make sense in a time of increased threats and global instability.

While the POSTURE Act puts the brakes on budget-driven force reductions, the Army will also face negative consequences if the additional end strength is not funded. During a recent hearing on the Army’s Fiscal Year 2017 budget, Army Chief of Staff GEN Mark Kinney told the Senate Appropriations Committee that stopping the drop in Army end strength without providing funding to cover the additional costs would undermine readiness and potentially result in a hollow Army.

AUSA looks forward to working with you to advance the POSTURE Act, but urges you to consider ways to provide the additional resources to prepare our Army to face a dangerous and increasingly unstable world.

Sincerely,

GORDON R. SULLIVAN,
General, USA Retired.

NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF
THE UNITED STATES, INC.
Washington, DC, February 26, 2016.

Hon. CHRIS GIBSON,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

On behalf of the nearly 45,000 members of the National Guard Association of the United States and the approximately 450,000 soldiers and airmen of the National Guard, please accept our sincere thanks for your leadership in introducing the Protecting Our Security Through Utilizing Right-Sized End-Strength (POSTURE) Act of 2016 (H.R. 4534), a bill that would stop the drawdown of U.S. Land Forces.

NGAUS strongly supports your legislation. The National Commission on the Future of the Army (NCFA) recommended a minimally sufficient Total Army of 980,000 soldiers; however, it provided no optimal end-strength level. NGAUS testified before the NCFA that the Total Army was at the risk of becoming dangerously small given the current threat environment.

Given the velocity of instability, the demand for U.S. Land Forces will likely only increase for the foreseeable future. U.S. Land Forces must be sized to address these threats without putting undue stress on our soldiers and marines.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure this important legislation becomes law. Thank you, as always, for your continued support for members of the National Guard.

Sincerely,

GUS HARGETT,
Major General (Ret), USA, President.

RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION,
1 March 2016.

Hon. CHRIS GIBSON,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN GIBSON: The Reserve Officers Association (ROA) supports your bill H.R. 4534, “Protecting Our Security Through Utilizing Right-Sized End-Strength Act of 2016” or the “POSTURE Act.” This bill recognizes the vital contributions of the Reserve Components and the need to ensure

they have the right Fiscal Year 2016 end strength authorized.

Since 9/11, more than 900,000 Reserve Component members have been activated to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and other contingencies. Despite increased use of the Guard and Reserve, the Congressional Research Service, identified end strength reductions between FY2001 and FY2015.

“Between FY2001 and FY2015, the largest shifts in authorized end strength have occurred in the Navy Reserve (–31,600 or –35.5%), Air Force Reserve (–7,258 or –9.8%), and Coast Guard Reserve (–1,000 or –12.5%). A smaller change occurred in the Air National Guard (–3,022 or –2.8%) and Army Reserve (–3,300 or –1.6%), while the authorized end strength for the Army National Guard (–326 or –0.1%) and the Marine Corps Reserve (–358 or –0.9%) have been largely unchanged during this period, (FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act: Selected Military Personnel Issues, R44120).”

As stated in the bill, passing this legislation will ensure Guard and Reserve members are available, “. . . to deter threats, shape the international security environment, respond to emergent situations and crises, and, if necessary, to fight and win the Nation’s war. . . .”

ROA has a membership of 50,000, which represents all the uniformed services of the United States who would be favorably affected by your bill. Thank you for your efforts on this issue, and past support to the Military.

Sincerely,

JEFFREY E. PHILLIPS,
Executive Director.

Mr. GIBSON. Lastly, Madam Speaker, the legislative strategy here is that we have been building out support. Our hope is that when the mark for the national security policy bill, which will be unveiled here in the next couple of weeks, that this bill will be included in the underlying bill because we think it is just so critically important that we get this done this year.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to come together with my colleagues to talk about such an important issue for the American people.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1945

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS— ROAD TO RUIN: HOUSE REPUBLICANS FAIL ON THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. JEFFRIES. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include any extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Madam Speaker, it is an honor and a privilege, once again, to come to the House floor on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus and join with my distinguished colleague

from Ohio, Representative JOYCE BEATTY, as we anchor this Congressional Black Caucus Special Order—the CBC hour of power—where, for 60 minutes, we get an opportunity to talk to the American people about issues of great importance to the African American community, to our democracy, and, certainly, to our country at large.

Today, we are here to discuss, tragically, the House GOP’s continued failure to demonstrate the ability to govern in a basic fashion—that is to pass a budget, which is required by statutory law, as of April 15. That deadline has come and gone, and we are still waiting for the House majority to present a budget to this body for our consideration.

We were told for years by people, including by the current Speaker of this great House, that the most fundamental tenet of governing is the passage of a budget. Yet, even with Republicans in firm control of both the House and the Senate, it seems that this Congress is still unable to get its act together. It is a stunning act of legislative abdication of basic responsibilities. We are going to explore that tonight, not just from a procedural standpoint, but from a standpoint of how this is indicative of this majority’s unwillingness and inability to do the business of the American people.

It is now my honor and my privilege to yield to my distinguished colleague, my coanchor, my classmate—the always eloquent and effervescent gentlewoman from the great city of Columbus in the great State of Ohio, Representative JOYCE BEATTY.

Mrs. BEATTY. I thank the gentleman.

I always look forward to engaging in our Congressional Black Caucus’ Special Order hour and, tonight, for our dialogue, for our debate, on the House Republicans’ repeated failure to pass a budget.

First, let me say, as your classmate and colleague, being able to be the voice for your constituents and my constituents and America at large, it is an honor. I think it is so important, when we think about how important the work of this Congress is, for us to take on challenging the House Republicans’ road to ruin.

Madam Speaker, tonight, the Congressional Black Caucus is going to discuss the importance of why we should pass a budget. Not only that, I am sure Mr. JEFFRIES and I will have a dialogue about the value and the importance of having a budget. As Members of Congress and, especially, as members of the Congressional Black Caucus, we know specifically that a budget creates jobs and that it raises the paychecks of hardworking American people while reducing the deficit in a balanced and responsible way.

Madam Speaker, let me just take a moment to point out that this is not