

of defense against waste, fraud, and abuse in Federal programs. In fiscal year 2014 alone, IGs made recommendations to improve the economy and efficiency of Federal programs that could save \$46.5 billion. As my colleague, Mr. MEADOWS, stated, this is a return of about \$18 for every \$1 invested in IG budgets.

The bill would make a number of improvements to the Inspector General Act. It will guarantee IG access to agency information. Unfettered access to agency information is a cornerstone of the IG's ability to conduct their missions effectively. The bill would also grant IGs the authority to issue subpoenas to compel testimony after careful review and with the concurrence of the Department of Justice. IGs would also be granted expedited authority to match Federal records across agencies under this bill, which would facilitate audits and help identify fraud and waste in Federal programs.

Mr. Speaker, I urge Members to support the Inspector General Empowerment Act, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank Chairman CHAFFETZ for his vision and Ranking Member CUMMINGS for working in a bipartisan way to not only empower our IGs, but give them the tools necessary to do what they do best; that is, to work on behalf of the American taxpayer.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to let Congresswoman LAWRENCE know that I have no further speakers at this point and am prepared to close.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Mr. Speaker, I, again, give my support to this bill. I want to note that this is bipartisan. So often we have many disagreements on either side of the aisle about policy. It is a good day in Congress when we work together in a bipartisan way to empower our Federal agencies while saving money and creating efficiencies.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE), my good friend. She well notes that not only is this a bipartisan bill, but it is one that is widely supported. I would also like to thank our respective staffs for the hard work that they have put in on crafting this particular piece of legislation. I think it becomes a powerful tool.

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

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support the Inspector General Empowerment Act.

Inspectors General play a crucial role in making the federal government more effective and efficient. The bill we are considering today will help the IGs do their jobs even better. I appreciate the time and effort that Oversight Committee Chairman JASON CHAFFETZ and his

staff put into making this bill a truly bipartisan product. I also want to thank Representative MARK MEADOWS for his work on this bill.

This bill would make crystal clear that Inspectors General have the right to access any information available to the agency the IG oversees. An agency could not deny an IG access to information unless Congress expressly limits the rights of an IG to access the information in a statute.

The bill includes special provisions for grand jury information held by the Department of Justice. Under the bill, the IG for DOJ would have unfettered access to grand jury information, but the Attorney General could limit access to grand jury information for other agency IGs under certain exceptions. This language was painstakingly worked out with feedback from DOJ and the Inspectors General.

The Inspector General Empowerment Act would also give Inspectors General the ability to subpoena witnesses. This would be a significant new authority.

I believe most IGs would act responsibly and use this authority only when absolutely necessary. There is a potential for abuse, however, so the bill includes several safeguards. The bill would require an IG, before issuing a subpoena, to go through two reviews.

The first review would be conducted by the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency. A panel of three Inspectors General would approve or deny any request by an IG to issue a subpoena for witness testimony. The second review would be conducted by the Attorney General, who would have the opportunity to object if the subpoena would interfere with an ongoing investigation. I believe the bill strikes a careful balance in granting IGs the authority to interview witnesses outside of the government while also providing these important checks against potential abuse.

The Inspector General Empowerment Act would also make needed reforms to the process used for investigating allegations of wrongdoing by Inspectors General. The current process can be agonizingly slow. The bill also contains several other reforms aimed at helping IGs perform independent audits and investigations.

This is a good bill, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2395, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### FEMALE VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take from the Speaker's table the bill (S. 2487) to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to identify mental health care and suicide prevention programs and metrics that are effective in treating women veterans as part of the evaluation of such programs by the Sec-

retary, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

There was no objection.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2487

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act".

#### SEC. 2. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATION OF WOMEN VETERANS IN EVALUATION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMS.

Section 1709B(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by inserting before the semicolon the following: ", including metrics applicable specifically to women";

(2) in subparagraph (D), by striking "and" at the end;

(3) in subparagraph (E), by striking the period at the end and inserting "; and"; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

"(F) identify the mental health care and suicide prevention programs conducted by the Secretary that are most effective for women veterans and such programs with the highest satisfaction rates among women veterans."

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, was read the third time, and passed, and a motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1700

#### FISCAL YEAR 2016 DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SEISMIC SAFETY AND CONSTRUCTION AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4590) to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out certain major medical facility projects for which appropriations are being made for fiscal year 2016, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4590

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Fiscal Year 2016 Department of Veterans Affairs Seismic Safety and Construction Authorization Act".

#### SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF CERTAIN MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY PROJECTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) AUTHORIZATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility projects, with each project to be carried out in an amount not to exceed the amount specified for that project:

(1) Seismic corrections to buildings, including retrofitting and replacement of high-risk buildings, in San Francisco, California, in an amount not to exceed \$175,880,000.

(2) Seismic corrections to facilities, including facilities to support homeless veterans,