

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 28, the Biological Implant Tracking and Veteran Safety Act of 2017.

Two years ago this month, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, released a startling report detailing a failure on the part of the Department of Veterans Affairs to follow requirements for documenting open-market purchases of surgical implants and the lack of a standardized process for tracking biological tissue from cadaver donors to living veteran recipients.

Currently, there is no requirement for VA to systematically identify or track biological implants used in the VA medical facilities. Due to this oversight, if a given biological implant was identified as potentially contaminated or made the subject of a recall, it would be impossible for VA to identify which patients receive the impacted material and, therefore, take steps to inform at-risk patients and address contamination concerns.

That same GAO report also found that VA did not consistently ensure that the vendors that the Department purchases biological implants from are registered with the Food and Drug Administration, and that VA did not maintain an inventory system to prevent expired tissues from remaining in storage alongside unexpired tissues. Needless to say, each of these findings poses a serious and unacceptable risk to veterans' health and safety.

Veterans seeking care through the VA healthcare system deserve a quality standard that is second to none, especially within a system which prides itself on data collection and its electronic health record. The Biological Implant Tracking and Veteran Safety Act would provide a high-quality standard for surgical implants that is now sorely missing.

By requiring VA to implement a standard identification tracking system for biological implants used in the VA medical facilities and requiring VA to procure biological implants only from approved vendors, H.R. 28 would address the deficiencies GAO identified and provide VA a necessary tool to ensure accountability and patient safety. Mr. Speaker, I would say the VA just should do this for quality of care for patients.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise today in support of the Biological Implant Tracking and Veteran Safety Act. This bill will require the VA to implement a standard identification system for biological implants that is consistent with the Food and Drug Administration's unique device identification system. This system will allow for the tracking of implants from donor to recipients. This bill will also require VA to procure biological implants only from vendors using the system and only through competitive procurement processes.

The GAO has testified that the Veterans Health Administration is one of the largest purchasers of surgical implants, which include biological implants such as skin and bone grafts, and nonbiological implants such as cardiac pacemakers and artificial joints. The GAO has raised valid concerns regarding VA medical centers complying with VHA requirements for documenting surgical implants purchased from the open market and VHA's ability to identify veterans who received an implant that is being recalled by the manufacturer or the Food and Drug Administration.

Patient safety is our number one concern. We all want to ensure that VA policies are fully followed in this regard. The legislation will continue to protect veterans while they receive the best care available.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I would like to extend my public congratulations to my good friend, Dr. PHIL ROE, for being named by the majority as the chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I can tell you that Members on my side of the aisle are looking very much forward to working with Dr. ROE. He has a splendid reputation.

I don't want to ruin his reputation by saying that we absolutely embrace him because that would make his side of the aisle, I think, a little worried, but the fact is we believe that Chairman ROE is someone that we can work with and who has a genuine, sincere concern for veterans. He is a veteran himself. He is a medical doctor. As we try to gain the trust of veterans and gain the trust of Americans in VA health care and the veterans department, we are very much looking forward to working with him. I offer him my congratulations.

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

□ 1800

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate those kind words. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, this particular committee is a bipartisan committee. For the veterans out there who are watching this and for the American citizens who are watching this, this is truly a committee where we check our political affiliations at the door and try to do what is right and best for America's heroes. I am not talking about the committee, but I am saying in the country that has not always been done. I am a Vietnam-era veteran, and that

wasn't done for my generation to begin with.

There is a real commitment on both sides of the aisle, the staffs of both committees and the members of both committees. I am excited to get to work with my friend, Mr. TAKANO. We have been to Afghanistan together and gotten to know each other very well and worked on many issues together. I look forward to doing this. I appreciate his kind comments and also his support for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support this legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. ROE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 28.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO THE JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to 15 U.S.C. 1024(a), and the order of the House of today, of the following Member on the part of the House to the Joint Economic Committee:

Mr. TIBERI, Ohio

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER TO THE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to clause 11 of rule X, clause 11 of rule I, and the order of the House of today, of the following Member to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence:

Mr. NUNES, California, Chairman

APPOINTMENT—HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING COMMISSION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to 2 U.S.C. 2001, and the order of the House of today, of the gentleman from California (Mr. MCCARTHY) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) as Members of the House Office Building Commission to serve with the Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair announces that the Speaker has delivered to the Clerk a letter dated January 3, 2017, listing Members in the order in which each shall act as Speaker pro tempore under clause 8(b)(3) of rule I.