

NOT VOTING—10

Beatty	Palazzo	Walters, Mimi
Carbajal	Polis	Walz
Issa	Sewell (AL)	
Noem	Vargas	

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE ACTING CHAIR

The Acting CHAIR (during the vote).
There is 1 minute remaining.

□ 2150

Mr. ROTHFUS changed his vote from
“no” to “aye.”

So the amendment was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced
as above recorded.

Stated against:

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. Chair, the machine did
not register my no vote. Had I been present,
I would have voted “nay” on rollcall No. 252.

The Acting CHAIR. There being no
further amendments under House Reso-
lution 918, the Committee rises.

Accordingly, the Committee rose;
and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. ROD-
NEY DAVIS of Illinois) having assumed
the chair, Mr. COLLINS of Georgia, Act-
ing 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.
5895) making appropriations for energy
and water development and related
agencies for the fiscal year ending Sep-
tember 30, 2019, and for other purposes,
had come to no resolution thereon.

**SERGEANT ERNEST I. “BOOTS”
THOMAS VA CLINIC**

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I
ask unanimous consent that the Com-
mittee on Veterans Affairs be dis-
charged from further consideration of
the bill (S. 2246) to designate the health
care center of the Department of Vet-
erans Affairs in Tallahassee, Florida,
as the Sergeant Ernest I. “Boots”
Thomas VA Clinic, and for other pur-
poses, and ask for its immediate con-
sideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there
objection to the request of the gen-
tleman from Tennessee?

There was no objection.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 2246

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

**SECTION 1. REDESIGNATION OF A DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLINIC IN
FLORIDA.**

(a) DESIGNATION.—The Health Care Center
of the Department of Veterans Affairs lo-
cated at 2181 Orange Avenue in Tallahassee,
Florida, shall after the date of the enact-
ment of this Act be known and designated as
the “Sergeant Ernest I. ‘Boots’ Thomas VA
Clinic”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in any
law, regulation, map, document, paper, or
other record of the United States to the clin-
ic referred to in paragraph (1) shall be con-
sidered to be a reference to the Sergeant Er-
nest I. “Boots” Thomas VA Clinic.

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.

**ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOP-
MENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant
to House Resolution 923 and rule
XVIII, the Chair declares the House in
the Committee of the Whole House on
the state of the Union for the further
consideration of the bill, H.R. 5895.

Will the gentleman from Illinois (Mr.
HULTGREN) kindly take the chair.

□ 2153

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
further consideration of the bill (H.R.
5895) making appropriations for energy
and water development and related
agencies for the fiscal year ending Sep-
tember 30, 2019, and for other purposes,
with Mr. HULTGREN (Acting Chair) in
the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The Acting CHAIR. When the Com-
mittee of the Whole rose earlier today
pursuant to House Resolution 923,
amendment No. 1 printed in part B of
House Report 115-712 offered by the
gentleman from Minnesota (Mr.
NOLAN) had been disposed of.

It is now in order to consider amend-
ment No. 2 printed in part B of House
Report 115-712.

AMENDMENT NO. 3 OFFERED BY MS. ESHOO

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order
to consider amendment No. 3 printed in
part B of House Report 115-712.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Chairman, I have an
amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will
designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as fol-
lows:

Page 21, line 24, after the dollar amount,
insert “(increased by \$1,000,000)”.

Page 32, line 1, after the dollar amount, in-
sert “(reduced by \$1,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to
House Resolution 923, the gentlewoman
from California (Ms. ESHOO) and a
Member opposed each will control 5
minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentle-
woman from California.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Chairman, first, I
want the House to know that this is a
bipartisan amendment.

This amendment provides a \$1 mil-
lion increase for the Office of Energy
Efficiency and Renewable Energy to
fund the development and deployment
of high-efficiency linear generator
technology.

Linear generators convert fuel and
air into electricity with the same effi-
ciency and near zero emissions as the
highest performing fuel cells on the
market, and they are superior to many
legacy fuel cells. But instead of using
an electrochemical process like fuel
cells, linear generators use an
electromechanical process that relies
on only two moving parts and no oil,
which reduces capital and maintenance
costs and results in a life span of three

to four times greater than a traditional
fuel cell.

Equally as important, linear genera-
tors are dispatchable and can provide
electricity even when the electricity
grid is down. This is especially valu-
able in areas recently hit by hurricanes
like Puerto Rico and Houston, Texas,
and other extreme weather events like
last year’s wildfires in northern Cali-
fornia.

Linear generators also provide resil-
ient baseload power, which eliminates
the need for expensive, unreliable, and
dirty diesel back-up generators.

At its heart, this amendment is
about investing in the future of energy
production, and it is about laying the
groundwork for the innovators in our
country to do what they do best: out-
perform the status quo and outcompete
the rest of the world.

The United States has been a global
leader in the development of energy ef-
ficiency technology, reducing energy
costs and increasing reliability for con-
sumers. But we are in danger of falling
behind our foreign competitors.

Mr. Chairman, linear generator tech-
nology was born in my Silicon Valley
district by some of the best and the
brightest minds from Stanford Univer-
sity. And although this technology is
substantially similar to fuel cells, it
faces an uphill battle and an uneven
playing field in bringing these products
to market, despite the many benefits of
the technology itself.

□ 2200

This amendment will ensure that the
Fuel Cell Technologies Office at the
DOE invests in the next generation of
fuel cell technologies and maintains
U.S. leadership in this critical field.

Mr. Chair, it is nice not to have any
opposition, so I urge my colleagues to
support the next generation of fuel cell
technologies and vote “yes” on this bi-
partisan amendment.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is
on the amendment offered by the gen-
tlewoman from California (Ms. ESHOO).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 4 OFFERED BY MR.

PERLMUTTER

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order
to consider amendment No. 4 printed in
part B of House Report 115-712.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will
designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as fol-
lows:

Page 21, line 24, after the dollar amount,
insert “(increased by \$5,000,000)”.

Page 32, line 1, after the dollar amount, in-
sert “(reduced by \$5,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to
House Resolution 923, the gentleman
from Colorado (Mr. PERLMUTTER) and a
Member opposed each will control 5
minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman
from Colorado.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Chair, I offer a simple amendment today to increase funding for DOE's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's facilities and infrastructure account by \$5 million.

Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member of the Energy and Water Subcommittee for their support of the facilities account over the last few years.

As Chairman HULTGREN knows, I represent Golden, Colorado, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory. NREL is the premier energy efficiency and renewable energy lab in the world. For more than 40 years, NREL has led the charge in research and design of renewable energy products affecting the way we utilize and secure American energy. Labs like NREL are working to bring life-changing technological innovations to the market so we can better power our Nation and reduce costs for our customers.

The facilities account supports NREL by funding operation of the Energy Systems Integration Facility, general operations, safety and security of the lab, as well as maintenance and replacement of infrastructure and equipment at NREL. This is the account that enables NREL to focus its research dollars directly into new research and technologies.

The bill in front of us today makes significant investments in infrastructure and equipment at many of DOE's other 16 national labs, including through the Office of Science. NREL has those same needs for modest investments in new equipment to stay on the cutting-edge and avoid losing American leadership in materials, research, high-performance computer modeling, and more.

Congress has supported DOE's national labs and science activities very well in the last 2 years, yet EERE's facilities account has remained flat.

This \$5 million increase is needed this year to fund a growing list of equipment and maintenance needs at NREL, and I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment.

It takes \$5 million from the administration account and adds \$5 million to the facilities account.

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

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chair, I claim time in opposition to the amendment.

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

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The bill provides \$92 million for the facilities and infrastructure program within the EERE account. That level fully funds operation and maintenance activities at NREL and is the same amount as was appropriated last year.

In light of EERE being reduced by \$243 million compared to last year's level, I would say that the bill contains very strong support for NREL's operations and maintenance activities.

This amendment goes too far in increasing an account that already has strong support.

Additionally, I am concerned that the amendment would have unintended consequences in taking away strategic funding from the departmental administration account.

Mr. Chair, for these reasons, I must oppose the amendment and urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Chairman, I urge a "yes" vote on this amendment.

The facilities account at NREL has been held flat. We need to boost and improve some of the equipment there. So I think this is a needed amendment, and I would ask for an "aye" vote.

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

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

The amendment was rejected.

AMENDMENT NO. 5 OFFERED BY MR. HASTINGS

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 5 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 22, line 13, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$5,000,000)".

Page 24, line 3, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$7,666,667)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

Mr. HASTINGS. Mr. Chair, let me say at the outset to the chairman and ranking member, that I do not intend to ask for a recorded vote on this measure. I thought earlier today that I would withdraw the amendment, but in light of the fact that we are here in the middle of the night, I decided I may as well make my point.

Mr. Chairman, my amendment would increase funding for cybersecurity of the electric power grid by \$5 million, offset by reductions in fossil energy research and development.

Like almost everyone in this body, I am deeply concerned about the cybersecurity of our Nation's electric power grid.

I don't know how many of you know that yesterday there was a major outage—that hadn't reached the news, for some reason—of the Comcast telephone network. I don't think there was anything untoward with reference to it, at least it hadn't been reported.

The mere fact is that we are more reliant than ever on this Nation's power grid to provide electricity to the massive amount of technologies that contribute to our country every single second: cellular communications equipment; heating and cooling to our workplaces—especially cooling in this par-

ticular workplace that seems to be overused, in my opinion—and homes; lights to guide us at night on highways; and on and on.

While we have never been more dependent on electricity, our electric energy grid has never been as vulnerable as it is today.

With the rise of nation-state-supported computer hackers in countries like Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and the rogue hackers, the computers that control our power networks are increasingly seen as the most impactful targets for those who wish to do us harm.

Outages from such attacks will cause harm not only to our national security, but our economic stability as well. They will hurt, to name just a few, hospitals, banks, factories, financial networks, water systems, telecommunications, and military bases.

I believe that we must work with those who operate our grid to give them the tools they need to detect and prevent malicious actors from causing damage to our electric system and critical infrastructure.

This funding of \$5 million that I would request, and will again somewhere, is just a fraction of what is needed, but it sends a signal at least that we are serious about addressing this vulnerability, and that is my purpose here this evening.

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

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chair, I claim time in opposition to the amendment.

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

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chair, I agree with everything the gentleman just said, but I disagree with the amendment. Everything he said is absolutely accurate.

My colleague's amendment would increase funding for the Cybersecurity, Energy Security, and Emergency Response, or CESER, account, by using the Fossil Energy account as an offset.

I share my colleague's support for the important work funded by the CESER account, and the underlying bill reflects that support. In fact, the CESER account was provided an increase of \$50 million over last year's level. That is a 52 percent increase in this bill. Put another way, that is the single largest percentage increase in any account in this bill.

I support the CESER account and efforts to enhance the cybersecurity and resilience of our electrical grid. That is why the bill provides the highest level of funding these research and development activities have ever had.

However, my colleague's amendment would take away funds from other important research and development activities.

The Fossil Energy account focuses on research and development activities that ensure the Nation is using its abundant natural resources as safely, cleanly, and efficiently as possible.

Targeted increases to the Fossil Energy account support technological advances in carbon capture, carbon storage, and advanced energy generation technologies.

Cuts to the Fossil Energy account threaten these innovations.

In light of the robust support for the CESER account in the underlying bill and the unintended consequences this amendment may have on the Fossil Energy account, I must oppose the amendment, but I will tell my colleague that I look forward to working with him to address this concern that ought to concern all of us.

Cybersecurity is a huge issue, and I think it is going to be one of the biggest things we face in the coming years.

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

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

The amendment was rejected.

The Acting CHAIR. The Chair understands that amendment No. 6 will not be offered.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. ROGERS OF ALABAMA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 7 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 33, line 14, after the dollar amount, insert “(increased by \$24,000,000)”.

Page 34, line 21, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$24,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. ROGERS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama.

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Chair, I thank Chairman SIMPSON and Ranking Member KAPTUR and all their subcommittee colleagues for, again, putting together a strong Energy and Water appropriations bill this year.

As the chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, I know how crucial that bill is to our national defense.

The Atomic Energy Defense activities funded by this bill and authorized by the NDAA are critical to our nuclear deterrent, and that nuclear deterrent is not just the warheads and missiles over in DOD; it is also the people, capabilities, and infrastructure in DOE. Together, they comprise our nuclear deterrent.

My amendment would align a key aspect of this appropriations bill related to DOE's nuclear weapons infrastructure with the fiscal year 2019 NDAA that the House passed 2 weeks ago by a bipartisan vote of 351-66.

My amendment provides \$24 million in funding to the Material Staging Facility project, which will enable huge

security improvements, operational efficiencies, and billions in long-term cost savings at the Pantex plant in Texas.

This project was initiated in the fiscal year 2018 NDAA and fiscal year 2018 omnibus appropriations bill, because Congress recognized its importance.

My amendment would ensure that this project stays on track and align with its fiscal year 2019 appropriation and with the fiscal year 2019 NDAA authorization.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting what they have already supported in the NDAA and vote “yes” on my amendment.

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

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Idaho is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. SIMPSON. Mr. Chair, I want to thank the gentleman for his support for and active lobbying for the weapons activities that are so vital to our country. He makes sure that we do our job here.

Mr. Chair, I have no problem with the amendment, and hope it will pass.

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

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 8 OFFERED BY MS. JACKSON LEE

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 8 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, 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 division A, before the short title, insert the following:

SEC. _____. The amounts otherwise provided by this Act are revised by reducing the amount made available for “Corps of Engineers-Civil-Construction”, and increasing the amount made available for the same account, by \$100,000,000.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, again, I offer my appreciation both to the Rules Committee and to the chairman and ranking member.

This is to emphasize the need for funding in the Army Corps of Engineers. It is an amendment that increases and decreases by \$100 million, with the focus on the construction account.

I hold up examples of construction projects that are necessary, not only in the Gulf region, but projects that are necessary across the Nation.

□ 2215

That is, of course, dams, reservoirs, reservoir pools, and other areas that can be devastated by disaster. And so this amendment is to emphasize the Army Corps of Engineers construction account, particularly dealing with the need for repair to river and harbor, flood and storm damage, shore protection, aquatic ecosystem restoration and, as well, to include the need to deal with our ports.

So my amendment is, again, to reflect on the devastation of the storm that occurred over the last year. With the prediction of 14 storms coming in 2018, approximately five or so to be of monumental impact and hitting the Gulf Region, it is imperative that the Army Corps of Engineers move on their construction account and move on their construction projects to avoid some of the disaster that we have already experienced.

I ask my colleagues to support the Jackson Lee amendment.

In concluding, let me emphasize the Port of Houston, which truly needs the Army Corps of Engineers' efforts, particularly in dredging. We are a man-made port. That is a very important aspect of our work, and that is construction work.

The Port of Houston today is operating with draft restrictions that may last a year or longer. Draft restrictions are adding costs to oil and gas and petrochemical operations, which are passed on to wholesalers, who pass these costs to consumers at the pump.

It is also well known that the work that the Army Corps of Engineers does in respect to repair helps the environment. So again, I ask my colleagues to support the amendment, what is a focus on the Army Corps of Engineers' construction account, but I would like to make the additional point that we, in the region, need an expedited utilization of those dollars to fix the repairs, prepare us for oncoming potential disasters not only in my particular State, but across the region.

I ask my colleagues to support the Jackson Lee amendment.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 9 OFFERED BY MR. LAMALFA

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 9 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, 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 division A (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. _____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enforce the criteria of abandonment described in provision G of provision V of the rule published in the Federal Register at 58 Fed. Reg. 45008 (relating to Clean Water Act Regulatory Programs).

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, my amendment today aims to protect private property rights of farmers and ranchers by upholding the long-standing policy of “once a PCC, always a PCC,” otherwise known as a prior converted cropland.

There are over 53 million acres of prior converted cropland throughout the country, and for more than 30 years, both Congress and the administration have clearly stipulated these lands were not waters of the United States. These are lands that have been previously cleared, drained, or otherwise altered and operated for decades of farming activity. They do not have the same geographical values as a wetland and should not be regulated as such.

This view was further reinforced by the Clinton administration in its 1993 wetlands plan, specifically exempting prior converted cropland from this regulation. This should apply regardless of any change in use, including agriculture back to non-agriculture use.

However, in recent years, the EPA and Army Corps have used a creative interpretation of their abandonment criteria to regulate prior converted cropland, massively devaluing farmland that had been previously converted from wetlands for the purpose of agriculture decades before.

We have already seen this in a number of cases, where the EPA presumes cropland is under their jurisdiction unless the property owner proves otherwise, either through lengthy and expensive soil testing or by taking land out of production and fallowing it for years.

If this rule continues, there is no obstacle to prevent agencies from applying this more broadly, including to any project in the U.S. being planned on prior converted croplands actively used for agriculture production.

Furthermore, this regulation has set a terrible precedent by being authored in the Federal Register, where there is no public comment or review period.

My amendment seeks to unify the policy of the United States Department of Agriculture on prior converted cropland with the EPA, and, indeed, once it is a prior cropland, it is always a prior cropland, regardless of its use.

By unifying these policies, this amendment will ensure that all prior converted croplands that are exempt will remain protected from overregulation and reinterpretation of the Army Corps and EPA.

My amendment will not force wetlands back into agricultural lands. It will not prevent any current wetlands from being regulated as wetlands. This simply says that the land we have already converted away from wetlands will stay that way, not be unfairly regulated under the intent of Congress when this legislation was originally passed.

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment.

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, essentially, the LaMalfa amendment would prohibit funds from being used to enforce the criteria for abandoned prior converted cropland. Currently, if land categorized as prior converted cropland has not been used for agricultural purposes for 5 consecutive years, if the owner of that land wanted to fill or dredge it, they would need to get a section 404 permit from the Corps, and those are generally wetlands.

So this amendment would basically create a “once exempted from having to get a Section 404 permit, always exempted” standard, overturning 35 years of Federal policy.

The amendment makes a significant change to the Clean Water Act regulations, one that deserves thoughtful consideration. Under current law and regulation, activities that convert wetlands that occur as a part of existing ongoing farming, ranching, and silviculture activities do not require section 404 wetlands permits.

Let me repeat that for my colleagues. The Clean Water Act explicitly exempts certain activities from regulation, including normal agricultural activities like plowing fields, planting and harvesting crops, and maintaining irrigation and drainage ditches.

The gentleman from California wants to go further than the exemptions already in the law and in the underlying bill. In his view, wetlands should be able to be filled, even when prior converted farmland has had no action or indication of actual agricultural use for 5 consecutive years; that is, there has been no cropping, no management, no maintenance activities related to agricultural production.

I say to my dear colleague from California, it is hard to understand how prior cropland wouldn't be abandoned if none of the activities of farming are performed there for 5 consecutive years.

I would also like to point out that this specific regulation has been on the books for 35 years; yet this amendment would overturn at least 35 years of policy to create a “once exempted, always exempted” standard for any land that was ever used as farmland.

Now, let me tell you, additionally, why this concerns me. According to the Ohio—my home State—Environmental

Protection Agency, since the late 18th century, 90 percent of Ohio's wetland resources have been destroyed or degraded through draining, filling, or other modification. Because of the valuable functions the remaining wetlands perform, including filtration to adjoining lakes and streams, it is imperative to ensure that all impacts to wetlands are properly mitigated.

Wetlands help filter impurities from water. Sediment settles out the runoff, and contaminants bind to plant surfaces in wetlands, resulting in improved water quality. Wetlands perform other valuable functions, including reducing flood flow and shoreline erosion control.

In Ohio, we also depend upon our wetlands as a haven for rare and endangered plants, and one-third of all the endangered species depend on wetlands for survival; and many wetlands are important fish spawning and nursery areas, as well as nesting, resting, and feeding areas for waterfowl.

So we should make certain that any changes we make to wetlands policy that may result in the destruction of these important ecological areas are evaluated carefully and that we not overturn decades-old policy lightly.

It is for these reasons that I must respectfully oppose the amendment, and I urge my colleagues to do so as well.

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, this amendment simply reiterates that the long-held policy that prior converted—and these are key words, “prior converted croplands”—all these prior converted croplands were done over 30 years ago before laws were changed to prevent such activity of converting wetlands. Every intent of Congress, and even the Clinton administration, worked to clarify that you cannot use the Clean Water Act.

Indeed, you talk about 40 years' worth of policy. It has only been in recent years that a more aggressive reinterpretation of policy by Army Corps and EPA has started coming after people requiring 404 permits if they choose to do something different with their own private land after 5 years.

This is affecting people in my own district, and they are losing million-dollar lawsuits because of this reinterpretation, not one set up by Congress when the original legislation was passed.

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

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Chairman, this amendment does not prevent any current regulations on current wetlands. Again, it goes after the aggressive rule-making that EPA, with their cohorts in the Army Corps, have put upon landowners and farmers and ranchers in more recent years.

So, if we sit back and watch bureaucrats attempt to gain control over every ditch, puddle, and pond they can

get their hands on, then we are in a bad way in agriculture and, as well, the sacred private property rights our country is founded on. It is a major threat to the livelihood of ag and rural America.

So, again, the intent here is not to roll back any current wetlands but simply to allow people, if they want to make crop changes, they want to make decisions on their land that they are paying the property tax on, they are paying the mortgage on, if they want to change their use of the land, they should have that right in the United States of America and not have to get permission for something that has been—the key words here—prior converted under the law.

Mr. Chairman, I ask for “aye” votes of this body, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA). The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 10 OFFERED BY MR. GOHMERT

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 10 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Chairman, 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 division A (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. ____ . None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to prepare, propose, or promulgate any regulation or guidance that references or relies on the analysis contained in—

(1) “Technical Support Document: Social Cost of Carbon for Regulatory Impact Analysis Under Executive Order 12866”, published by the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Carbon, United States Government, in February 2010;

(2) “Technical Support Document: Technical Update of the Social Cost of Carbon for Regulatory Impact Analysis Under Executive Order 12866”, published by the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Carbon, United States Government, in May 2013 and revised in November 2013;

(3) “Revised Draft Guidance for Federal Departments and Agencies on Consideration of Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Effects of Climate Change in NEPA Reviews”, published by the Council on Environmental Quality on December 24, 2014 (79 Fed. Reg. 77801);

(4) “Technical Support Document: Technical Update of the Social Cost of Carbon for Regulatory Impact Analysis Under Executive Order 12866”, published by the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Carbon, United States Government, in July 2015;

(5) “Addendum to the Technical Support Document on Social Cost of Carbon for Regulatory Impact Analysis Under Executive Order 12866: Application of the Methodology to Estimate the Social Cost of Methane and the Social Cost of Nitrous Oxide”, published by the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of Greenhouse Gases, United States Government, in August 2016; or

(6) “Technical Support Document: Technical Update of the Social Cost of Carbon for Regulatory Impact Analysis Under Executive Order 12866”, published by the Interagency Working Group on Social Cost of

Greenhouse Gases, United States Government, in August 2016.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Chairman, the amendment prohibits the use of funds to prepare, propose, or promulgate any regulation or guidance related to the social cost of carbon.

Social cost of carbon metric was a tool, and is a tool, used to bolster many Obama-era regulations. They supposedly targeted vague, ambiguous, and unverifiable costs.

In an article this week, The Wall Street Journal points out that by introducing “social costs” and “social benefits,” the EPA began factoring in speculation about how regulatory inaction would affect everything from rising sea levels to pediatric asthma, EPA optimists even including their guesses about how domestic relationships could have a global impact.

Meanwhile, the Agency ignored the best practices from the Office of Management and Budget, juking the numbers to raise the cost of carbon emissions. This proved as politically useful as it was scientifically imprecise.

Months before introducing the Clean Power Plan, the EPA suddenly raised these social costs of a ton of carbon emissions to an average of \$36 from \$21, completely unverifiable.

□ 2230

Now, the regulatory specifics will be hashed out in coming months, but there is really potential here to curb the distortions that mask bad policy.

If Mr. Pruitt succeeds, future cost-benefit analyses will be more consistent and transparent. The reform would help to ensure regulation is based on sound, scientific analysis instead of wishful bureaucratic thinking.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, this is ultimately a tax on the Nation's poor. The rich, they can handle these added, superfluous costs that come out of the nebulous areas of bureaucrats' minds, but the real ultimate cost is actually to the Nation's poor.

I can't help but go back to a woman, an elderly lady that lived outside of Carthage, Texas, that said: “You know, I keep having these costs go up and up and up. I am afraid I am going to end up in my home going back to a wood-burning stove because of the Federal Government.”

And I said: “I really hate to be the one to break this to you, but your wood-burning stove you used when you were growing up that your mama used probably wouldn't be allowed today.”

Anyway, there is no reason to have this kind of cost, and I would urge a passing of this amendment. Let's quit adding nebulous, unverifiable costs.

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chair, I rise in opposition to this amendment.

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chair, I have to oppose my good friend Mr. GOHMERT on this amendment.

The gentleman actually wants to prohibit funds from being used to implement any activities regarding the social costs of carbon. And this amendment tells the Department of Energy to ignore the latest meteorological data and changes dealing with weather science. And the amendment denies that carbon pollution is harmful. According to this amendment, the cost of carbon pollution is zero.

I remember my first trip to New York City after I graduated from college. Thank goodness it has changed. I had a pink blouse on. By the time I finished the first afternoon, it was so full of gray spots I hardly recognized it. And I didn't know what it was. Well, it was carbon. It was fallout from the chimneys and so forth in New York City.

So we know that carbon has impacts. This amendment is tantamount to saying that weather changes and climate change have no cost and no one will get hurt. Well, that simply isn't true. Tell that to citizens in Puerto Rico who lost businesses, homes, and loved ones after Hurricane Maria, that there is no cost from weather changes.

Last year's devastating hurricane season resulted in Puerto Ricans still without power 9 months later, almost 5,000 lives lost, and almost 200,000 people displaced from their homes.

House Republicans can vote for this amendment, they can try to block the Department of Energy from recognizing the damage caused by climate changes, but they can't overturn the laws of nature.

I am amazed in my part of the country how much water is coming down now, spring rains at such fierce levels. The way they come, it is very different from when I was first growing up there.

So, in the National Climate Assessment, our Nation's leading climate scientists reiterated what we have known for years: Climate change is real, evidenced by the climate-related indicators we have observed, including longer seasons, extreme droughts, and sea level rise.

The amendment tells the Department to ignore these scientific findings. That is irresponsible and a blatant disregard to the well-being and security of our great Nation, not just now but into the future.

The truth is that unchecked climate change would have catastrophic impacts here in the United States and across the globe. They are already starting.

Those who are less fortunate will face the heaviest impact. I remember going down to New Orleans and seeing the Ninth Ward. The poorest people in New Orleans lived in the Ninth Ward, and it was the most dangerous place to live.

While claiming that climate change has no cost, House Republicans and the Trump administration seem to be arguing that they are the champions of the working class, decrying the critical EPA safeguards and their alleged impacts on working-class Americans and their access to healthcare.

It is amazing to look at maps of where trees exist. Many times in cities across this country, where the poorest people live there are no trees. And there is a direct relationship between asthma, the lack of oxygen, and trees.

So you don't have to pay attention to the science, but it is pretty clear.

I think it is outrageous that the opposition party has the nerve to pose as the defenders of working-class Americans because, actually, you have a pretty poor record of defending those who are the poorest, ranging from dropping food stamps, to the GOP tax scam selling out Medicare and Medicaid to pay for corporate tax breaks, to Republican Governors deciding not to approve the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act and now trying to get rid of people on insurance who have preexisting conditions, to failing to quickly provide funding resources and the necessary leadership to help the victims of last fall's hurricanes.

The evidence is all out there if anybody cares to look. But to hear you tell the story, the only way to protect the health of America's workers and their children is to weaken longstanding public health protections.

To say we should allow polluters to pollute more? That is nonsense. More air and water pollution won't make our Nation's citizens any healthier. More toxic pollution certainly isn't the answer. And the answer certainly isn't pretending that climate change won't have real costs to all Americans.

I was interested to hear tonight some of our colleagues from New Mexico telling about how very, very dry New Mexico is, with one of the shortest snowfalls in history.

So it is time to stop denying the science and accept reality: Climate change is occurring, it is caused by humans, and it is already causing serious damage.

We are at the beginning of a new hurricane season, and now is not the time to pretend that extreme weather events, rising seas, and more frequent storms do not have a cost.

Before the Trump administration abandoned common sense, the social cost of carbon was a very conservative calculation. The full costs of a rapidly changing climate are almost certainly significantly higher, but the social cost of carbon is a much, much better estimate than assuming the costs are zero.

Unfortunately, that is what this amendment would require the government to assume: zero harm and zero cost from carbon pollution and climate change.

So I urge my colleagues to reject this amendment. Pretending climate

change doesn't exist won't make it go away.

I yield back the balance of my time.
Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Chairman, I really have such great respect for my friend across the aisle, and I do truly mean that. But when I hear talk about what Republicans did to our Nation's poor and our seniors, I keep coming back to the ObamaCare vote, without a single one of the Republicans voting for that bill. Democrats have to take full credit. They passed it without a single Republican vote and cut \$716 billion out of the healthcare of seniors.

Now, President Obama told them: Seniors, you don't have to worry. It will only come out of the pockets of the rich, greedy doctors.

Well, what our folks have found out is that is not the case at all. It has affected the elderly completely. It has been a real problem for them, because what they have seen is that, actually, if their healthcare provider doesn't get paid, they don't get their healthcare.

So I would just like to say again, I need to urge people to vote for this amendment. Making our Nation's poor pay for ambiguous, unverified costs and saying we are somehow making the world better while they are making the poor poorer is absolutely unsubstantiable, and I would urge a "yes" vote.

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

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

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. 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 Texas will be postponed.

The Chair understands that amendment No. 11 will not be offered.

AMENDMENT NO. 12 OFFERED BY MR. KILDEE

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 12 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 64, line 21, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$250,000)".

Page 68, line 5, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$250,000)".

Page 68, line 16, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$250,000)".

Page 78, line 20, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$250,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, this is a bipartisan amendment. It is very sim-

ple. It would expand the House Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program so that more wounded servicemembers have the opportunity to continue serving our country by working in congressional offices.

We need more veterans in public service. They bring unique perspectives and experiences, unlike any other. The veterans that I have been fortunate enough to hire in my office have given me invaluable support and allowed me to consider issues that are important to veterans in an important and much more enlightened fashion. Their voices are important in this body, more now than ever.

By investing in the Wounded Warrior Fellowship Program, more veterans will get a chance to serve. Expanding this program will enhance the professional development opportunities for those fellows.

We in Congress do talk a lot about ways to help veterans transition following their service in the military. This is an opportunity for us to actually do something about that and model what we think all employers ought to be doing.

It is a simple way to expand opportunities for veterans. It increases the number of veterans in public service. Again, in my office, I have benefited greatly from the veterans that I have hired. It is a bipartisan effort to continue to expand this program.

I ask my colleagues to pass this amendment. It is a small way to not only improve the function of our own offices but also say thanks to the brave men and women who have given so much for the freedom that we all enjoy.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chair, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the gentleman for his amendment. We are pleased to accept it. This is a remarkable program, and we want to honor those who serve and allow them to serve with us in a further capacity.

I wanted to commend the gentleman. I believe we have about 110 serving in congressional offices, and this will provide additional opportunities to some remarkable young men and women.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 13 OFFERED BY MS. ESTY OF CONNECTICUT

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 13 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Ms. ESTY of Connecticut. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 64, line 21, after the dollar amount, insert “(increased by \$500,000)”.

Page 66, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert “(increased by \$500,000)”.

Page 67, line 13, after the first dollar amount, insert “(increased by \$500,000)”.

Page 79, line 5, after the first dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$500,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ESTY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Connecticut.

Ms. ESTY of Connecticut. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of my amendment, which would allocate an additional \$500,000 to the Office of Employee Assistance under the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer of the House of Representatives.

The Office of Employee Assistance provides valuable services for Members of Congress and their staff. Unfortunately, this office is grossly understaffed. Currently, there are 6 staff in the Office of Employee Assistance to serve the 435 Members of Congress and their staff, a total of over 9,000 House employees.

How could a staff of 6 possibly meet the needs of over 9,000 employees? No company, no State or Federal agency would have an employee assistance staff of 6 to serve 9,000 employees. Neither should the House of Representatives.

Managing a team of people and creating a positive workforce culture is a unique skill and challenging work. Managing people requires many skills, such as leadership, good communication, interpersonal skills, humility, and a good sense of humor.

□ 2245

Members of Congress and office supervisors such as chiefs of staff and legislative directors need additional resources to help them develop the skills to successfully lead their teams, establish a strong office culture, and make this House of Representatives a better place to work.

Members of Congress have diverse backgrounds, levels of education, and work experience, as well as varying levels of comfort managing employees. We are elected to be great leaders, but in order to be effective and to be role models, we must also be great bosses.

New and tenured Members of Congress would greatly benefit from more knowledge and support when it comes to successfully organizing their teams, hiring new employees, disciplining and evaluating staff, and handling employment complaints, including sexual harassment. The Office of Employee Assistance can and should be empowered to provide this support to every Member of Congress and all their staff.

Chiefs of staff and legislative directors need the resources necessary to help them develop their supervisory skills and to succeed as managers. Chiefs of Staff and legislative directors are key to creating and maintaining a

positive workplace culture and a professional office setting. The quality of their training shapes the culture of our offices.

I don't claim to be an expert in this area. In fact, before I became a Member of Congress, I had very little experience as an employer, much less as a manager of 20 employees in two separate offices in two different parts of the country. Like all new Members, I was focused on doing what I was elected to do: helping the people of my district and working on issues important to them. I know now that I would have benefited as a new Member from more training and awareness of resources to assist me and my senior staff with running an effective and supportive office.

At a time when this Congress rightly is being called upon to seriously address longstanding issues of sexual harassment in our workplace, we have an obligation to provide better resources to our colleagues and to our staff. Making more funds available to the Office of Employee Assistance is an important step for us to take in that effort. Our dedicated staff deserves better.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. ESTY of Connecticut. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. We would be very pleased to accept the gentlewoman's amendment. We commend the gentlewoman for her effort. We also commend the effort of those who work in this office dealing with many, many hundreds of cases. We are pleased to accept the amendment.

Ms. ESTY of Connecticut. Again, they do heroic work, and they do important work. There aren't enough of them. I am hopeful for the support.

I thank the gentleman for his support. I think this is a very important amendment for us to adopt to demonstrate our commitment to do better for all of our staff and to be leaders, not followers, in this effort for a supportive and inclusive workplace.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ESTY).

The amendment was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 14 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

AMENDMENT NO. 15 OFFERED BY MR. MEADOWS

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 15 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Chairman, 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 division B (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. _____. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to enforce the amendment made by section 1501(d) of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, 2010 (Public Law 111-68; 123 Stat. 2041).

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Chairman, initiating an independent counsel investigation comes with many political and constitutional challenges.

These individuals were vested with full power and independent authority to exercise all investigative and prosecutorial functions and powers of the Department of Justice with respect to matters within their jurisdiction.

When the independent counsel statute was reauthorized in 1994, an amendment was made to the law requiring the Government Accountability Office to conduct periodic audits of independent counsel expenditures. This amendment gave Congress the ability to audit any and all independent counsel expenses and investigate how those taxpayer dollars were spent.

This is an important procedure that was repealed in 2010, and it is time Congress act to restore this key oversight provision. My amendment reestablishes the semiannual Government Accountability Office financial review of obligated expenditures from the independent counsel and requires the report's findings to be submitted to Congress.

While the work of an independent counsel is indeed important, it is just as important that we properly take account of where the hardworking American taxpayers' dollars go. So to ensure this accountability, I want to urge the passage of this amendment.

I want to take one personal privilege of thanking the fine work of Chad Yelinski.

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition.

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Chair, I understand that Mr. MEADOWS offers this amendment to try to attack Special Counsel Mueller and his team to imply that there is some sort of impropriety going on here with the Russian investigation.

Of course, these improprieties aren't with the special counsel, Mr. Chair; the problems are with Russia and the people in our country, our political system, and our current administration who repeatedly communicated and met with Russian operatives during the Presidential campaign. But trying to muddy the waters by going after the integrity of the investigators is a classic tactic used by the people who feel threatened by an investigation because they know they have been caught.

The bottom line is the way this amendment is drafted, it doesn't do anything. It says that no funds in the bill can be used to “enforce” a repeal of the provision of law that happened a

decade ago. Not enforcing a repeal is not the same as reinstating the provision that was repealed.

This amendment was drafted in this tortured fashion to avoid violating the rules of the House that prohibit legislating on an appropriations measure. In any case, there is currently no independent counsel. Robert Mueller is a special counsel, and neither he nor the GAO would be affected if this amendment became law.

Let me just suggest, Mr. Chair, that if people in this town are interested in ending this situation that we have going on, I would suggest that maybe the President of the United States call up Mr. Mueller, go and clear the air, tell the truth, say what he has to say, and let's move on as a country.

For those reasons, I oppose the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Chairman, I find it very interesting that the gentleman opposite would claim to know my motives in that he has not talked to me about it.

I also find it very ironic that the gentleman makes the argument that my amendment does absolutely nothing and yet opposes it. So, indeed, if it does nothing, then I can't find any reason why he wouldn't support it.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would certainly urge the adoption of my amendment, and being the late hour that it is, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS).

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. 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 North Carolina will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 16 OFFERED BY MR. TAKANO

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 16 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, 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 division B (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. _____. There is appropriated, for salaries and expenses of the Office of Technology Assessment as authorized by the Technology Assessment Act of 1972 (2 U.S.C. 471 et seq.) \$2,500,000, to be derived from a reduction of \$3,463,000 in the amount provided in this Act for the item for "Architect of the Capitol, Capital Construction and Operations".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

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

Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of my amendment, which would restore funding to the Office of Technology Assessment, or OTA.

I would like to thank Representatives FOSTER, ESTY, DELANEY, LANGEVIN, LIEU, and LUJÁN for offering this amendment with me.

The foundation for good policy is accurate and objective analysis, and for more than two decades, the OTA set that foundation by providing relevant and unbiased technical and scientific assessments for Members of Congress and staff. In 1995, the OTA was defunded, stripping Congress of a valuable resource.

Many of the issues OTA studied 20 years ago, like antibiotic-resistant bacteria and electronic surveillance in the digital age, are even more pressing today.

Mr. Chair, Congress needs access to unbiased technological expertise to weigh the pros and cons of policy questions surrounding cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and so many more matters. The recent Facebook hearings made it clear that many Members of Congress struggle to grasp the policy issues surrounding social media and data security.

I applaud the chairman and ranking member for including a study in the underlying bill to look into the technological expertise available to Congress. It is an important first step, but it is not enough.

Our amendment restores a modest \$2.5 million to the OTA account for salaries and expenses to begin rebuilding the office. The cost is offset by a reduction to the AOC's capital construction and operations account. This administrative account will not take resources from specific construction projects.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on the amendment to restore funding to the Office of Technology Assessment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from New Jersey is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, this amendment would provide funding to re-create a government agency, as the gentleman mentioned, which was defunded in 1995, 23 years ago. Before we re-create an entire government agency, I believe the most responsible thing to do is to study the need for such an agency and to identify the best path forward.

After receiving dozens of requests advocating for the restoration of this funding, this bill has included, through the work of Chairman YODER—and I am briefly taking his place and have the pleasure of working with Ranking Member RYAN.

We have included in the report accompanying this bill language direct-

ing the Congressional Research Service to engage with the National Academy of Public Administration or a similar entity to produce a report detailing, first of all, the current technology assessment resources available to Members within the Government Accountability Office, to some extent, which has taken over this responsibility for the last 23 years; also to assess the potential need to create a separate entity; and, lastly, are there parts of what are being suggested here already duplicative within the available resources and services of the legislative branch?

For this reason, I oppose the amendment and urge the Members to do so as well.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chair, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. FOSTER).

Mr. FOSTER. Mr. Chair, I thank my colleagues for helping me bring this amendment to the floor.

We now live in a world where technology has become increasingly important in our personal lives, in our economy, and in our democracy, but Congress is not adequately prepared to lead on the technical issues that could have serious effects on our country's future.

The Office of Technology Assessment would provide Congress with nonpartisan reports and realtime advice on issues that require leadership from lawmakers, including data privacy, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and others. When it was operating, lawmakers used the OTA's reports to make decisions that save taxpayer money, which is why this amendment received bipartisan support in the past.

Before it was defunded, the OTA advised Congress, for example, on the importance of interoperability of electronic health records, advice that, had it been acted on, would have saved billions of dollars and thousands of lives.

So I urge my colleagues to support this amendment and restore the OTA so Congress, once again, has access to credible and nonpartisan scientific expertise.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, the GAO does most of what these gentlemen are seeking. I think, obviously, they have a certain feeling, and I respect those feelings. I don't think we need to create an agency, basically the duties of which have been taken, for the last 23 years, by the Government Accountability Office.

Mr. Chairman, I urge the Members to vote against the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 2300

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN), the ranking member of the committee.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Chairman, I will brief.

I want to lend my support. I think this is a good amendment, a positive

amendment. Things are moving so quickly in society, we need as much expertise as possible.

So I thank the gentleman from California and urge an “aye” vote on this amendment.

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the majority for including the report.

I just want to remind the majority also that the OTA was never eliminated; it just was defunded. I believe it is time to fund it again.

I refer back to the Facebook hearings in the Senate. I think people on both sides of the aisle, liberal and conservative, and think tanks observed that the first branch of government, which is the legislative branch of government, needs to have the resources and the capacity to do its own independent analysis.

That is why I believe so many of my Republican colleagues will support this tomorrow. I hope everyone on both sides of the aisle supports this amendment.

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

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

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. 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 California will be postponed.

AMENDMENT NO. 17 OFFERED BY MR. COHEN

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 17 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Chairman, 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 division B (before the short title), insert the following:

SEC. 512. None of the funds made available by this Act may be used to purchase plastic drinking straws.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. COHEN) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee.

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

This amendment, which is an environmental amendment, would prohibit the House from spending funds to purchase plastic drinking straws in our eating areas in the House.

Plastic drinking straws are a considerable environmental risk to mammals and fish. They are dropped and discarded on the streets but particularly in the oceans. And they have had whales show up with 17 pounds of plastic in their stomachs and tortoises

with straws in their nostrils and all kinds of awful things. It is a threat to sea turtles and all kinds of marine wildlife.

This would be an opportunity for us to show the public that we are aware there are cities, restaurant associations, and other groups that are banning straws or at least asking that they be made optional for customers so that they are used or not used, but let the customer make that decision. I think this would be a great thing for the House to do to show that we understand this environmental problem.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. COHEN. I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Chairman, I would be very pleased to accept the amendment. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee for his forethought and concern, which we also share.

Mr. COHEN. Reclaiming my time, I appreciate the chairman and all the work he has done for many, many years in the House, and I appreciate the opportunity to serve with him.

And I appreciate the ranking member for his help on this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I ask for an “aye” vote, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The amendment was agreed to.

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 18 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

AMENDMENT NO. 19 OFFERED BY MR. KILDEE

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 19 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 109, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$32,287,000) (increased by \$32,287,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, this amendment is intended to highlight the lack of urgency by the Air Force to address an ongoing drinking water emergency across the country, including one in my home district. I am not talking about Flint; I am talking about Oscoda, Michigan, at the northern end of my district, the home of the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base.

My constituents living there have had their drinking water contaminated by PFAS, perfluorinated chemicals, from the Air Force's use of firefighting foam. Exposure to PFAS has been linked to harmful health issues like cancer as well as thyroid, kidney, liver,

heart, and reproductive problems. It is not just servicemembers but community members there.

Unfortunately, the more we learn about this dangerous class of chemicals, the more we are finding it in drinking water across the country. In my district alone, thousands of people have cancer-causing chemicals in their drinking water due to the Air Force's use of this material.

The Air Force does not seem to want to recognize this ongoing drinking water crisis. I have been pushing the Air Force to clean up the contamination in Oscoda and other communities. In fact, the entire Michigan delegation, Democrats and Republicans, wrote to appropriators asking for more funding for PFAS contamination.

While Members are prevented from earmarking legislation to send resources directly to clean up contamination in Oscoda, it is an urgent problem that I wanted to call attention to. This community is near this former Air Force Base. It is facing very serious water contamination issues.

You would think that the Air Force would request additional resources to clean up contamination, but, frustratingly, the Air Force has so far refused to request additional resources.

The Appropriations Committee even asked the Air Force if they needed more money. Let me repeat that. The Appropriations Committee even asked the Air Force if they needed more money to address this problem, but the Air Force responded that they did not need any additional funds.

I offer this amendment for the purpose of raising the issue. I know that it is not possible for us to designate these funds, so it is my intention to withdraw this.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I am very sympathetic to the gentleman from Michigan's plight.

PFAS chemicals have been found in groundwater and drinking water in Michigan due to their use in firefighting foam at former Wurtsmith Air Force Base. In fact, many closed installations across the country have a PFAS problem.

For many decades, the Department of Defense used a class of chemicals called PFAS and PFOA in firefighting foam. However, we now know that PFAS is a toxic chemical that has negative health effects on the environment.

I would like to work with the gentleman from Michigan on this issue to ensure that cleanup costs in his district are properly addressed in a timely manner, and I look forward to working with him on this issue.

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

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I thank my friend from Florida, the ranking member of the subcommittee, for her commitment to work on this.

This is a serious issue. I know Congress takes it seriously. I just would ask that the Air Force take it equally as seriously and request the funds necessary to clean up this really difficult problem.

With that, I know that this amendment could present some problems in terms of the way this legislation moved forward, but the commitment that I have that this will be getting the attention it deserves from Congress, I think, is important.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The amendment is withdrawn.

AMENDMENT NO. 20 OFFERED BY MRS. TORRES

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 20 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 109, line 23, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$5,000,000) (increased by

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Chair, I rise to offer my amendment No. 20 to division C of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations bill for Military Construction and Veterans Affairs.

This amendment is meant to address an issue we have in Ontario, California. However, I expect many of the Members of this body have experienced it in their own districts at some point.

In the Rules Committee hearing last night, I referred to this amendment as giving the Secretary of Defense the ability to finish the job, and that is precisely what we should expect from our service branches when they close military bases in our districts during BRAC rounds.

Ontario International Airport was the Ontario Air National Guard Station, which was established in 1949. This facility remained in operation for decades, assisting training and support for the Korean, Vietnam, and countless other wars and conflicts.

In 1997, the facility was closed as part of the latest Base Realignment and Closure process. This meant our Armed Services moved out. But instead of the airport being able to use the newly vacant land, the old site has sat largely unchanged for 20 years due to the environmental hazards of demolition.

When military bases are closed, it can be devastating to our local commu-

nities. At the very least, we should expect our service branches to leave our communities in as good or better shape than they found them.

In Ontario, California, old Air Force facilities have been left standing at the Ontario International Airport. These abandoned buildings have been overtaken by nature and look like the remains of a lost civilization, with trees and animals roaming free at the remaining site. This valuable but currently unusable space is hindering the growth of the Ontario Airport, and communities around Ontario depend on the airport.

My amendment would simply direct the Secretary to make available funds from the existing BRAC funding made available in this legislation to remove these old facilities.

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

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I claim time in opposition, although I am not opposed.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I will not oppose this amendment because it does not require DOD to fund anything in particular.

I would like to point out that the FY 2019 budget submission for Defense Appropriations included \$442.9 million for demolition within the facilities sustainment, restoration, and modernization account, double the FY 2018 level.

I would like to remind my colleagues that, while there may be a particular interest behind the amendments, these do not direct funding to a particular activity. Our bill does not even fund these activities. For this reason, I will not oppose this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I also do not oppose the amendment and find the gentlewoman's concept interesting.

It is pretty clear that getting another BRAC round is going to be difficult. In response, many services are demolishing facilities that they no longer need using operation and maintenance funding.

As we know, the BRAC account is primarily for environmental cleanup costs associated with closing bases. I would be interested to see if there are any environmental cleanup costs associated with the demolishing of buildings.

For that reason, I will not oppose the amendment, and I look forward to seeing the results of the gentlewoman's idea.

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

□ 2315

Mrs. TORRES. Mr. Chairman, the underlying bill has funding for BRAC closures. Before we proceed with any new closures, let's finish the job on the old closures.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to vote “yes,” and I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. TORRES).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 21 OFFERED BY MR. KILDEE

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 21 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 127, line 16, insert after the dollar amount the following: “of which \$2,037,547,400 shall be made available for vocational rehabilitation and employment programs under chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, my amendment would provide just over \$2 billion to the vocational rehabilitation and employment account. This account invests in programs to help veterans successfully transition to civilian life.

Our country has been at war for nearly two decades. While these conflicts are still ongoing, the number of veterans in this country is going to continue to grow. We have to invest in programs that support this generation of veterans as they seek to reintegrate into the civilian workforce.

I just want to highlight a couple of important programs in this account.

The Special Employer Incentives program connects veterans with opportunities where the VA reimburses the employer for up to half of a veteran's salary. This is a program that matches veterans with apprenticeships, with the expectation of being hired upon completion.

I know from experience that our veterans bring unique perspective and skills to the workplace. I have hired, as I have said in previous conversations, multiple veterans working in my office, including a Wounded Warrior fellow and a HillVets fellow. We should ensure that we are supporting programs that connect veterans with employers.

My amendment would also ensure funding for the VA to expand its Veterans Economic Communities Initiative, a program in which nonprofits and educational institutions build supportive networks for veterans. This is exactly the kind of long-term support that we should have had in place years

ago before launching into these conflicts.

For many Americans, the American Dream is owning your own business and being your own boss. The vocational rehabilitation and employment account includes programs that help veterans do just that.

The vocational rehabilitation and employment account also includes the VetSuccess on Campus program, which places vocational rehab counselors in partner schools.

This amendment would give the VA the opportunity to expand these programs, reaching even more veterans.

Unfortunately, as this process has moved forward, we have come to understand that the VA would intend to reduce the account for direct support for tuition and other supplies for veterans under their rights under the GI Bill.

I will ask that this amendment be withdrawn, but I want to make sure to make the point that we ought to have a specific carveout for these vocational programs, for these transition programs. It is my hope that, as we move forward, we will be able to work with the VA to be able to identify a source that would not reduce the other benefits that are available to veterans seeking to better themselves.

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

Mr. Chair, I withdraw this amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. The amendment is withdrawn.

AMENDMENT NO. 22 OFFERED BY MR. RUIZ

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 22 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 131, line 7, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chair, I rise today to offer an amendment to H.R. 5895 to provide \$1 million in additional critical funding for the VA to conduct educational outreach to veterans about the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

Our military uses burn pits to eliminate tons of waste, including chemicals, plastics, medical waste, human waste, computers—you name it—creating giant plumes of black smoke containing carcinogens, particulate matter, and other toxins.

For years, the Department of Defense used burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan, even while recognizing that exposure to burn pits may pose a health risk to our troops since about the late 1970s.

Now veterans all across the country— young veterans in their twenties and thirties—are developing rare and severe pulmonary diseases, cancers, and autoimmune diseases despite living healthy lifestyles, being healthy enough to be sent to war, and not having any other risk factors.

This may bring up thoughts of Agent Orange that our Vietnam veterans faced. Burn pits exposure and the negative health outcomes are being described by our veterans as our modern-day Agent Orange, and we must learn from our past mistakes and act now.

For more than a decade, veterans exposed to burn pits and their families have been given the runaround to get the care they have earned and deserve and to have their concerns taken seriously. My commonsense amendment would provide additional funding for the VA to conduct an educational outreach campaign on the burn pits registry to ensure more veterans register.

The purpose of the registry is to collect data from veterans and service-members exposed to burn pits to high-light health patterns and create cohorts for research on the health effects of exposure.

Mr. Chair, 3.7 million veterans are eligible to enroll in the VA burn pit registry; yet, after 4 years, only 144,000 veterans have enrolled. That is only a dismal less than 4 percent enrollment rate. It is clear that more outreach and education must be done to improve awareness about the registry.

These additional funds will also improve health outcomes by raising awareness for our veterans and their physicians so they can be on the lookout for subtle changes in their health, including respiratory issues, early signs of cancer, or even autoimmune diseases.

We have a responsibility to protect our men and women in uniform and veterans from the harmful effects of exposure to burn pits. If there is a high enough suspicion of a severe enough consequence, then we need to act now.

The four things we need to do are:

One, stop our troops’ exposure to burn pits out on the battlefield;

Two, outreach to doctors and veterans about the illnesses they may face so they can be vigilant and seek and get the appropriate care;

Three, give veterans and service-members the treatment that they have earned and deserve; and

Four, simultaneously do the research that is needed to understand the full scope of the dangers associated with exposure to burn pits.

By investing in this educational campaign about the burn pits registry, my amendment will help tackle two of these fronts by improving outreach to veterans and providing the VA with a larger study sample size to help determine the full scope of the negative health effects linked to exposure.

I urge my colleagues, on behalf of Jennifer Kepner, a 39-year-old mother of two who died of pancreatic cancer

after being exposed to burn pits, with no other risk factors, in Balad Air Force Base, I urge my colleagues, on behalf of all the others who have died of cancer at a young age and left behind families and those who have acquired pulmonary fibrosis and permanent disabilities who are now requiring oxygen, unable to work, I urge my colleagues to support my amendment and to take concrete action to help those veterans who have been exposed to burn pits. The health of our veterans must be put above bureaucracy. We must help them get the answers and the healthcare services that they need and deserve now.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition, though I do not oppose the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman from Florida is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, as the gentleman from California said, some veterans have reported respiratory issues and other health conditions that they believe are related to their exposure to burn pits.

There are studies that provide information about the health effects related to exposure, but not enough to determine the long-term impacts. In response, the VA is researching, responsibly, the issue and has created the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry for veterans and servicemembers. However, many veterans, unfortunately, do not know about the burn pit registry.

The gentleman from California’s amendment would help bring attention to the registry to get more veterans registered so that, should an issue arise, they can be contacted quickly and receive the care that they have earned.

There is no cost to the veteran to participate, and the veteran does not even need to be enrolled in the VA’s healthcare system.

The burn pit registry is a tool to help participants become more aware of their health and to identify health conditions possibly related to exposure to burn pits and other airborne hazards. But it only works if veterans know to sign up, and the gentleman’s amendment will accomplish that.

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chair, I appreciate the chairman and the ranking member and all those who are in support of this specific amendment, who will put our veterans above this bureaucracy and give them the care that they need by expanding their access to this burn pit registry. I want to, from the bottom of my heart, say thank you.

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, this registry is a tool that can be used to identify health concerns, guide discussions with a

healthcare provider, and document deployment-related exposures. We need to ensure that the VA is doing all it can to make veterans aware of this registry. It could literally, as the gentleman from California pointed out, be the difference between life and death.

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

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

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 23 OFFERED BY MR. JOHNSON
OF OHIO

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 23 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 131, line 7, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$1,000,000) (increased by \$1,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JOHNSON) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Chair, my amendment calls on the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop hospice care standards tailored to the unique needs of Vietnam-era combat veterans. As Vietnam veterans grow older, it is imperative that the VA has clear standards in place to care for this group and future veteran populations.

By the VA's own estimate, there are approximately 6.5 million Vietnam veterans. These veterans have unique medical and psychological needs which must be identified and addressed, including lethal diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure and a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance abuse.

As part of the fiscal year 2018 MILCON-VA Appropriations, Congress directed the VA to submit a report identifying the unique challenges faced by Vietnam veterans receiving specialized palliative and hospice care and to develop best practices for hospice care specifically tailored to Vietnam veterans. Unfortunately, the VA responded with an inadequate two-page report that did not meet the reporting requirements.

What the report did state is that there are over 4,000 community hospice care providers maintaining their own resources and training materials. This lack of cohesion indicates that the VA lacks consistent protocols and clear standards for veterans' hospice care.

The report language for this appropriations bill addresses the VA's Vietnam Veterans End-of-Life Care report, calling it woefully inadequate, and requires the VA to redo it within 30 days of enactment. However, as it is clear that the VA currently lacks consistent

hospice care protocols, I am instead calling on the VA to establish protocols that will meet the needs of Vietnam-era veterans.

The VA must act now to implement clear and consistent standards of care for our veterans in need of hospice care. Developing these standards would also be beneficial for Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria combat veterans in the future.

We have a responsibility to ensure that our Nation's heroes are receiving the care and benefits they deserve and have earned, and that includes ensuring the VA has in place clear hospice care standards and services tailored to the unique needs of these veterans.

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

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, I claim the time in opposition, although I will not oppose the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chair, we understand the gentleman's concerns and will keep them in mind for the conference. We have included report language on the topic in both the 2018 and 2019 reports.

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

Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio. Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support the amendment, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The amendment was agreed to.

□ 2330

AMENDMENT NO. 24 OFFERED BY MR. RUIZ

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 24 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chairman, as the designee of Mr. CARBAJAL, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 131, line 7, after the dollar amount, insert “(reduced by \$5,000,000) (increased by \$5,000,000)”.

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from California (Mr. RUIZ) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chairman, I rise today to offer an amendment with my good friend from Santa Barbara, California, Congressman SALUD CARBAJAL, to address an issue impacting veterans that prevents them from accessing healthcare services they have earned and deserve.

Right now, veterans calling their community-based outpatient clinics to make an appointment are automatically routed to central, busy call cen-

ters at major VA medical centers. This makes no sense.

This means that veterans end up waiting sometimes more than an hour, especially in CARBAJAL's district, to be connected to a scheduler, and that is if they can get through at all.

Additionally, some community-based outpatient clinics are not following up with veterans after the initial call at the busy hospital calling center, forcing veterans to find transportation to actually travel to the clinic just to make their appointment. As a result, many veterans get fed up and stop pursuing the care that they need out of frustration and lack of accessibility.

Our Nation's veterans deserve timely access to healthcare services. They should be able to make their medical appointments or at least speak to somebody without having to wait an hour on the phone.

This amendment directs the Secretary to ensure the VA phone system allows veterans to directly call their local community-based outpatient centers for appointments at those facilities, rather than having all calls be routed to the major busy VA medical centers.

In short, it would reduce call wait times for veterans in Congressman CARBAJAL's district, in my district, in your districts, and districts throughout our Nation.

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

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, we understand the gentleman's concerns. We will keep them in mind for conference. We will be interested in learning more about this problem that he identifies.

I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Providing veterans, Mr. Chairman, with prompt access to care is one goal that all Members of this body share. Call routing at the VA is a very important issue. We need to ensure that there is a system that meets the expectations of veterans and their loved ones.

There are numerous VA call center numbers available to veterans who have questions about healthcare benefits and other issues, and we must ensure that calls being made to the VA are prioritized, tracked, and routed to the correct place so that issues are promptly and thoroughly addressed.

We do also have, Mr. Chairman, an issue with there being a lot of different phone numbers at the VA, and that in and of itself is also confusing. So I, too,

look forward to working with both gentlemen from California. I appreciate their efforts on this issue.

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

Mr. RUIZ. Mr. Chairman, wonderful. This is a very easy, commonsense fix to a problem that our veterans face. They wait too long, they get fed up, they are not getting the followup that they need, and all this does is allows them to call the actual place where they need their appointments to schedule an appointment with them.

So I would really like to thank Chairman CARTER and Ranking Member WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for not opposing this amendment and for their support and for their support of veterans in the underlying bill.

I would also like to recognize and thank Congressman CARBAJAL and his staff for their work, and his efforts to improve the lives of veterans in his district, in my district, and all of our districts. I also want to thank my staff for their work on this amendment?

I urge a "yes" vote on this amendment to help ensure veterans have easy access to healthcare benefits that they have earned and deserve, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 25 OFFERED BY MS. MCSALLY

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 25 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk.

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 131, line 7, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$28,872,000) (increased by \$28,872,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Arizona.

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of the underlying legislation, H.R. 5895, and urge adoption of my amendment to division C of the bill, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2019. This amendment would increase critically needed funding for suicide prevention and outreach programs as part of a broader mental health service for our veterans.

Veterans make up less than 9 percent of the U.S. population, yet veteran suicides account for 18 percent of all suicides in America. After adjusting for differences in age and sex, that puts the risk of suicide at 22 percent higher among veterans than for civilian adults, and the suicide rates for female veterans has risen more than 85 percent since 2001.

This tragic trend is even more egregious in my home State of Arizona. According to a recent study by Arizona State University Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety, Arizona veterans are nearly four times more likely to take their own lives than nonveterans.

This study shows that veterans in Arizona committed suicide at a rate of 55 per 100,000, compared to a rate of 14 per 100,000 for nonveterans in Arizona. In my home State, that means veterans are 391 percent more likely to commit suicide than nonveterans—391 percent.

Despite these stark and startling statistics, studies and data across the board consistently show that mental health services, and, specifically, suicide prevention for veteran populations, continue to go unmet. It is not enough to simply talk about studies and statistics and hope for the best. Lip service will not save lives.

For over 500,000 veterans that call Arizona home, this can be a life or death issue. Today and every day, on average, 20 veterans took their own lives—20 of my fellow warriors, 20 heroes, 20 loved ones, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, 20 vets who often survived combating the enemy in conflict, only to come home and take their own lives.

Mr. Chairman, this is unacceptable. When they raised their right hand and took an oath that they were willing to defend our freedoms with their lives, we have a covenant that we got their back, and we are going to give them everything that they need.

I urge my colleagues, please, to support my amendment and ensure funding for suicide prevention programs is increased and we save their lives.

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

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting Chair. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, the gentlewoman's concerns about providing adequate funding to address veterans' mental health needs is shared by every member of our committee. We are pleased that the bill provides \$8.6 million for mental health programs, including \$196 million for suicide prevention outreach.

We will certainly try to maintain these substantial levels in conference.

Mr. Chairman, I yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, the gentlewoman is correct, roughly 20 veterans take their own lives every day in the United States, and it is a very serious problem that we need to address.

As the chairman mentioned, the bill provides \$8.6 million for mental health

programs, and that is actually \$6 million above the budget request. We are very proud of the work that the committee has done.

In addition, the \$196 million for suicide prevention outreach fully funds the veterans' crisis line, additionally, at \$90 million. The bill repeats language first included in the FY17 act requiring the veterans crisis line to provide to individuals who contact them immediate hotline assistance from a trained professional and to adhere to all requirements of the American Association of Suicidology.

The potential for suicide and making sure that we take care of our veterans who are facing crisis is absolutely critical. I do not oppose the amendment, but I do think it is important to stress that the committee did work to significantly prioritize this issue, and we appreciate the gentlewoman's attention to it.

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

Ms. MCSALLY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their commitment to our vets and to preventing suicide of these warriors, and I urge our colleagues to support the amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. MCSALLY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 26 OFFERED BY MR. WELCH

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 26 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 132, line 10, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$5,000,000)".

Page 131, line 7, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$5,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Chairman, my amendment would increase the VA medical services account by \$5 million for the purpose of strengthening the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

Burn pits, as you know, Mr. Chairman, were commonly used on U.S. military sites during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars to burn all types of waste—from chemicals, paint, medical waste, and human waste to munitions, petroleum, plastics, and rubber. But, as you know, many members of the military who were exposed to burn pits are beginning to experience negative health effects from the toxic smoke that they inhaled. And that is why I

am offering this amendment, to increase funding to address and assist those suffering more aggressively and quickly.

On May 7, Mr. Chairman, I met with a group of Vermont National Guard members led by Pat Cram, who have been impacted by burn pit exposure. Pat is the wife of Sergeant Major Mike Cram of the Vermont National Guard who died this past December from prostate cancer that is believed to be a direct result of his exposure to burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sergeant Major Cram first deployed to Iraq in 2004 with a group of MPs from the 42nd Infantry Division of the Vermont National Guard. They joined up with the 278th Tennessee National Guard Calvary in Iraq. All 21 soldiers from this group that deployed together for 18 months returned home to their families safely.

But since their safe return, this same group has lost two members from prostate cancer and another has been treated for it, and they believe their exposure to burn pit toxins is the reason.

This group is still close, they stay in touch, their families support each other. I was so inspired to hear about how they have stuck together throughout the years. But those members that have not had the direct health issues that some of their comrades have are now wondering whether they, too, will get sick.

This funding would provide resources to the VA to make necessary improvements to the registry and prepare for the long-term care for those affected veterans. It would also allow, Mr. Chairman, the VA to hire analysts and epidemiologists who can connect the registry entries to health outcomes, make necessary technological updates to the registry, and increase the funding for essential clinical research.

The cost of a war must always include the cost of caring for the warrior, and this critical funding helps to do just that.

I want to thank Chairman CARTER and Ranking Member WASSERMAN SCHULTZ for their attention to this issue and willingness to help. I urge support for my amendment, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition to the amendment, even though I am not opposed to it.

The Acting Chair. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, we understand the gentleman's concerns, and we will keep in mind this concern during our conference. I have heard from veterans in my district about the concerns, and, in fact, sat down with some last weekend, and this was one of their number one concerns.

So this has a health impact. These burn pits are something we really need to get into, and we will have this in mind in conference.

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

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman from Texas, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

The amendment was agreed to.

□ 2345

AMENDMENT NO. 27 OFFERED BY MR. BARR

The Acting CHAIR. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 27 printed in part B of House Report 115-712.

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

The Acting CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Page 131, line 7, after the dollar amount, insert "(increased by \$5,000,000)".

Page 132, line 10, after the dollar amount, insert "(reduced by \$5,000,000)".

The Acting CHAIR. Pursuant to House Resolution 923, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. BARR) and a Member opposed each will control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Kentucky.

Mr. BARR. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of my amendment to increase funding for the VA adaptive sports equine-assisted therapy program by \$5 million.

This grant program provides much-needed resources for evidence-based equine-assisted therapy that helps treat veterans suffering from unseen psychological wounds such as post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma, and traumatic brain injury. Increased funding for equine-assisted therapy will greatly improve mental health treatment for our veterans.

As the chairman of the Congressional Horse Caucus, the representative for the horse capital of the world, and as someone who cares deeply for our veterans, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this amendment.

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

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I claim the time in opposition, although I am not opposed to the amendment.

The Acting CHAIR. Without objection, the gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, the bill provides \$1 million over the President's budget request for the Adaptive Sports Grant, ASG, program for equine-assisted therapy, as our 2018 bill did also.

We understand the gentleman's concern in further increasing this funding and will keep it in mind during conference.

In my congressional district, we also have equine therapy, and I am very familiar with it.

Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Adaptive sports promotes the rehabilitation of disabled military service veterans. This is a vital program that allows veterans with disabilities to participate in physical activity, including those with mental health issues, within their home communities, as well as more advanced paralympic and adaptive sports programs at the regional and national levels.

Mr. Chairman, the committee is a strong supporter of this program. In fact, the bill provides \$17.8 million for the National Veterans Sports Program. I appreciate the gentleman addressing this issue today, and I support this amendment.

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

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

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. CARTER of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BARR) having assumed the chair, Mr. HULTGREN, 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. 5895) making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

SENATE BILLS REFERRED

Bills of the Senate of the following titles were taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 2377. An act to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 200 West 2nd Street in Dayton, Ohio, as the "Walter H. Rice Federal Building and United States Courthouse; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

S. 2734. An act to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 1300 Victoria Street in Laredo, Texas, as the "George P. Kazen Federal Building and United States Courthouse"; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

S. 2857. An act to designate the Nordic Museum in Seattle, Washington, as the "National Nordic Museums", and for other purposes; to the Committee on Natural Resources.

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 3249. An act to authorize the project Safe Neighborhoods Grant Program, and for other purposes.