

Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes, who have dedicated themselves to making this monument a reality. It is a long-overdue recognition of those who served proudly and courageously.

AMERICANS ARE BETTER OFF

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, as I travel Michigan's Seventh District, from neighborhood stores to the factory floor, there is a renewed sense of optimism. Folks I hear from feel safer and more secure about the future.

The economy is thriving thanks to progrowth policies like tax cuts and regulatory reform. Businesses are hiring, and there are more job openings than job seekers, and workers and families are seeing bigger paychecks and more take-home pay.

It is not just our economy that is getting stronger; our military is as well. We are taking care of our troops, raising their pay, and reforming the VA to help our veterans. We have also taken significant steps to combat the opioid epidemic, crack down on human trafficking, and make our communities safer.

Is there more work to do? Absolutely. Our focus will remain on helping to improve people's lives and making it easier for them to get ahead. The results so far are clear: Americans are better off now.

HONORING JOHN A. PALUMBO

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

Mr. BARR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of a special man, Mr. John A. Palumbo, from Lexington, Kentucky, who passed away earlier this month at the age of 97.

Mr. Palumbo was born in 1921 in Schenectady, New York. As a youth, he was a boxer, winning a Golden Glove, and then moved to Lexington to attend the University of Kentucky.

During his time as a student, World War II was raging, and Mr. Palumbo volunteered for the United States Army Infantry 1st Division.

Following basic training, he was sent to England to train for the D-day invasion. He landed on Omaha Beach at H-hour plus 58 minutes, actually swimming ashore when his landing boat received a direct hit and sank.

He fought across Europe and received many citations for his brave service, including the World War II Victory Medal and the Bronze Star.

After the war, Mr. Palumbo returned to Lexington, finished his education, married Nancyetta, and earned a law degree from the University of Kentucky. He worked for years in the lumber business and, as a Lexington developer, contributed greatly to the city of Lexington. He was well respected in

the business community and was active in several civic organizations.

Mr. Palumbo and his fellow veterans are true heroes. As members of the Greatest Generation, they willingly served to protect the freedoms we enjoy today.

I am humbled to honor the life of an American hero, Mr. John A. Palumbo, before the United States Congress, and I extend my deepest condolences to his family during this time.

SERBIA-U.S. RELATIONS

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

Mr. STIVERS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Bishop Irinej, from the Serbian Orthodox Church, for offering today's prayer.

We are at the 100-year anniversary of when President Woodrow Wilson raised the Serbian flag in a show of support for the Serbian people. That symbolic act of solidarity is remembered today, and I think it is really important.

Since 2006, my home State of Ohio has worked closely with the Serbian Armed Forces through the Ohio National Guard State Partnership Program. Soldiers from the Ohio National Guard and the Serbian Defense Forces have worked together on deployments and training. We have also worked together to construct schools, carry out humanitarian missions, and provide healthcare.

On this anniversary of the U.S.-Serbia cooperation, I look forward to another 100 years of friendship with Serbia, and Ohio stands ready to lead the way.

SUPPORTING THE BLADENSBURG WORLD WAR I MEMORIAL

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

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of an amicus brief filed by our majority whip, STEVE SCALISE, in defense of the Bladensburg World War I Memorial in Prince George's County.

The 93-year-old memorial honoring fallen soldiers has recently come under attack simply for being shaped like a cross. The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the memorial unconstitutional because of the inherent meaning of the cross as a religious symbol.

What kind of world do we live in where a monument to honor fallen soldiers of World War I—93 years old—is being threatened because of its shape or religious meaning?

What is more, this is a clear violation of the Establishment Clause, which has been litigated. It could only be described as hostility towards religion, not neutrality.

What is next, Arlington National Cemetery? the U.S. Capitol? or count-

less other national monuments, historic sites, or traditions?

The Supreme Court has a chance to reverse this decision. I urge them to set precedent that will protect America's historic monuments in perpetuity.

□ 1215

NEW MEXICO UNEMPLOYMENT RATE DOWN

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

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, in June, New Mexico's unemployment rate ticked down to 4.9 percent. This is the first time the State's unemployment rate has gone below 5 percent since September of 2008. And just for perspective, one year ago, in 2017, the unemployment was at 6.1 percent.

When we passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs bill, New Mexico didn't immediately feel the results, but now people are being filled with confidence, businesses are hiring, they are expanding, and people are going back to work.

But an even more remarkable development was the right to export our oil. Two counties in New Mexico are driving a surplus that is causing America to extend above and beyond where Saudi Arabia is currently producing. We are on track to become number one. That is after decades of saying that we had reached peak oil in the country.

When we release the ingenuity of the American worker, America can compete with anyone. These things are happening. America is better off today because of what we have done here in Congress as the Republicans.

CONDEMNING VIOLENCE BY THE GOVERNMENT OF NICARAGUA

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

Mr. BUDD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the resolution we are voting on this afternoon, condemning the violence committed by the government of Nicaragua against its own citizens.

I met with Brenda Lancaster and her husband last week in my office. She is a constituent of mine who started an organization called ZMI Family Ministries International, and they have planted ministries in five different countries, one of those countries being Nicaragua.

Mr. Speaker, Brenda has received hundreds of calls and messages from people affiliated with her ministry down there confirming the severity of the situation. She has seen pictures and videos that she wishes no one would ever have to see.

Luke 9:57 in the Scriptures recounts a man speaking to Jesus saying: "I will follow you wherever you go." Brenda

didn't think that she would start a ministry in Nicaragua, but that is where God led her. And now people who work and volunteer fear for their lives down there.

America has always been at the forefront of fighting human rights abuses around the world. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to do everything in my power to bring awareness to this pressing issue.

CONGRATULATING TEACH FOR AMERICA FELLOWS

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the participants of the 2017 Teach for America Capitol Hill Fellows Program. Soon, many fellows will conclude their year-long placement with committees and Member offices throughout the House and the Senate.

The fellowship offers insights into the legislative process with a focus on professional development, mentorship, and networking opportunities. I have had the pleasure of hosting Paul Camacho, an educator from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as a part of my staff. Prior to his fellowship, Paul taught for 6 years in Philadelphia and 2 years in Chula Vista, California. Before becoming a teacher, Paul spent 8 years in the Marine Corps where he traveled extensively and learned important leadership skills.

Paul has been a valuable member of my team, and I am grateful for his service. I wish Paul and his family the best as they start their next chapter.

Mr. Speaker, I commend all of the 2017 Teach for America Capitol Hill Fellows for taking a year to immerse themselves in public policy and the workings of the legislative branch. I encourage my colleagues to explore what this tremendous program has to offer to their offices.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

LONG-TERM CARE VETERANS CHOICE ACT

Mr. ROE of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5693) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts and agreements for the placement of veterans in non-Depart-

ment medical foster homes for certain veterans who are unable to live independently, to establish the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration and the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to amend the interest rate for certain loans guaranteed under the home loan program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5693

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act".

SEC. 2. SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CONTRACT AUTHORITY FOR PLACEMENT OF VETERANS IN NON-DEPARTMENT MEDICAL FOSTER HOMES.

(a) AUTHORITY.—Section 1720 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(h)(1) During the three-year period beginning on October 1, 2019, and subject to paragraph (2), at the request of a veteran for whom the Secretary is required to provide nursing home care under section 1710A of this title, the Secretary may place the veteran in a medical foster home that meets Department standards, at the expense of the United States, pursuant to a contract, agreement, or other arrangement entered into between the Secretary and the medical foster home for such purpose. A veteran who is placed in a medical foster home under this subsection shall agree, as a condition of such placement, to accept home health services furnished by the Secretary under section 1717 of this title.

"(2) In any year, not more than a daily average of 900 veterans placed in a medical foster home, whether placed before or after the date of the enactment of this subsection, may have their care covered at the expense of the United States under subsection (a).

"(3) In this subsection, the term 'medical foster home' means a home designed to provide non-institutional, long-term, supportive care for veterans who are unable to live independently and prefer a family setting."

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (h) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on October 1, 2019.

SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.

(a) VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Part V of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new chapter:

"CHAPTER 80—VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION

"8001. Organization of Administration.

"8002. Functions of Administration.

"8003. Annual report to Congress.

"§ 8001. Organization of Administration

"(a) VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION ADMINISTRATION.—There is in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration. The primary function of the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is the administration of the programs of the Department that provide assistance related to economic opportunity

to veterans and their dependents and survivors.

"(b) UNDER SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION.—The Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is under the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, who is directly responsible to the Secretary for the operations of the Administration.

"§ 8002. Functions of Administration

"The Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration is responsible for the administration of the following programs of the Department:

"(1) Vocational rehabilitation and employment programs.

"(2) Educational assistance programs.

"(3) Veterans' housing loan and related programs.

"(4) The verification of small businesses owned and controlled by veterans pursuant to subsection (f) of section 8127 of this title, including the administration of the database of veteran-owned businesses described in such subsection.

"(5) The Transition Assistance Program under section 1144 of title 10.

"(6) Any other program of the Department that the Secretary determines appropriate.

"§ 8003. Annual report to Congress

"The Secretary shall include in the annual report to the Congress required by section 529 of this title a report on the programs administered by the Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition. Each such report shall include the following with respect to each such program during the fiscal year covered by that report:

"(1) The number of claims received.

"(2) The number of claims decided.

"(3) The average processing time for a claim.

"(4) The number of successful outcomes (as determined by the Secretary).

"(5) The number of full-time equivalent employees.

"(6) The amounts expended for information technology."

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—The tables of chapters at the beginning of title 38, United States Code, and of part V of title 38, United States Code, are each amended by inserting after the item relating to chapter 79 the following new item:

"80. Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration 8001".

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Chapter 80 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on October 1, 2019.

(c) FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES.—For fiscal years 2019 and 2020, the total number of full-time equivalent employees authorized for the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition Administration, as established under chapter 80 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), may not exceed 23,692.

SEC. 4. UNDER SECRETARY FOR VETERANS ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND TRANSITION.

(a) UNDER SECRETARY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 3 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 306 the following new section:

"§ 306A. Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition

"(a) UNDER SECRETARY.—There is in the Department an Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition, who is appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Under Secretary for Veterans Economic Opportunity and Transition shall be appointed without regard to political affiliation or activity and solely on the basis of demonstrated ability in—