

COMMUNICATION FROM THE
CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 24, 2019.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MADAM SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on June 24, 2019, at 11:14 a.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 559.

With best wishes, I am,
Sincerely,

CHERYL L. JOHNSON.

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.

BOOSTING RATES OF AMERICAN
VETERAN EMPLOYMENT ACT

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2109) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, to give a preference to offerors that employ veterans.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2109

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 "Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act" or the "BRAVE Act".

SEC. 2. PREFERENCE FOR OFFERORS EMPLOYING VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 81 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding after section 8128 the following new section:

“§8129. Preference for offerors employing veterans

“(a) PREFERENCE.—In awarding a contract for the procurement of goods or services, the Secretary may give a preference to offerors that employ veterans on a full-time basis. The Secretary shall determine such preference based on the percentage of the full-time employees of the offeror who are veterans.

“(b) ENFORCEMENT PENALTIES FOR MISREPRESENTATION.—(1) Any offeror that is determined by the Secretary to have willfully and intentionally misrepresented the veteran status of the employees of the offeror for purposes of subsection (a) may be debarred from contracting with the Department for a period of not less than five years.

“(2) If the Secretary carries out a debarment under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall commence debarment action against the offeror by not later than 30 days after determining that the offeror willfully and intentionally misrepresented the veteran status of the employees of the offeror as described in paragraph (1) and shall complete debarment actions against such offeror by not later than 90 days after such determination.

“(3) The debarment of an offeror under paragraph (1) includes the debarment of all principals in the offeror for a period of not less than five years.”.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 8128 the following new item:

“8129. Preference for offerors employing veterans.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentlewoman from American Samoa (Mrs. RADEWAGEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 2109.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2109, the Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act, or BRAVE Act.

We know that overall veterans' unemployment rates are below the national average, and that includes a 3.5 percent rate for our younger post-9/11 veterans. However, this hides an alarming statistic: nearly one-third of veteran jobseekers are underemployed at a rate 15.6 percent higher than non-veteran jobseekers.

Both parties agree that men and women returning from our most recent conflicts deserve to come home to a reliable, good paying job. We owe them that.

We can start right here in the Federal Government. The VA establishes long-term contracts with private companies for medical equipment, construction supplies, services, and more.

Currently, the VA gives a preference for these contracts to veteran-owned small businesses.

The BRAVE Act would expand this contracting preference to allow the VA Secretary to give a preference to companies that actively employ veterans, a policy that would incentivize companies to hire more veterans, already a smart approach for companies, because veterans bring to a job the skills they earned and learned in their years of invaluable military training.

This bipartisan bill would not add any additional costs or burdens to the

taxpayers. It allows for the debarment of any company that knowingly misrepresents its proportion of veteran employees in order to receive a contracting preference.

The BRAVE Act represents a win-win for the private sector, the Federal Government, and most importantly, veterans themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Representative RICE for her hard work on this excellent bill, and Ranking Member ROE for beginning work on this bill last Congress. I urge my colleagues to support it today.

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

Mrs. RADEWAGEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2109, introduced by Representative RICE of New York.

Mr. Speaker, to improve employment opportunities for veterans and business opportunities for the companies that employ them, H.R. 2109 would authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, to consider the number of veterans who would be employed by a potential contractor and give the company that employs certain veterans credit for doing so during the contract approval process.

The bill would also allow VA to debar any contractor who willfully and intentionally misrepresents the number of veterans they employ.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to President Trump and Republican pro-growth policies, the veteran unemployment rate is at a near historic low of 2.7 percent.

I firmly believe that we should encourage businesses to provide job opportunities to veterans as well as provide VA with the authority to consider veteran hires when making contracting decisions. This legislation emphasizes that.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Representative RICE for her work on this bill, which has my full support. I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 2109.

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

Mr. TAKANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Miss RICE), my good friend, who is a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and a member of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, and the sponsor of H.R. 2109.

Miss RICE of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2109, the Boosting Rates of American Veteran Employment Act, which I introduced along with PAUL COOK from California.

The BRAVE Act is commonsense, bipartisan legislation that will authorize the VA Secretary to give preference to contractors with high concentrations of full-time veteran employees when awarding Federal contracts.

First, this bill will reward companies that actively hire and invest in veterans, companies that seek out veterans and give them opportunities to bring their unique skills and training