

the largest lessor or owner of commercial office space in the United States of America.

The program can use some improvement, and this will help shine a light on some of the issues and concerns we have as we look for some reforms in the way we acquire property in the most cost-effective manner for the American taxpayer. Sometimes GSA does things that make little or no sense when they get into lease agreements, like they did with the Department of Transportation, a beautiful new building. We are now going to buy the building for the second time, essentially, by having paid for the lease for a number of years. These things can be done more effectively and more efficiently, and this legislation will help set a path to that kind of cost savings.

It requires the General Services Administration to publish on its website all prospectuses for leasing, design, or construction activity; update the information quarterly, and maintain the information for no less than 10 years in a readable, accessible, and—this is key—a searchable form, not just post it and it is like, oh, sorry, there is no index. It has to be searchable.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good-government bill designed to provide taxpayers with information regarding the GSA's leasing, design, and construction projects for Federal agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2502, the Transparency in Federal Buildings Projects Act. As the chairman just mentioned, it is a common-sense piece of legislation.

I would like to thank the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER) for his leadership on this bill. I am pleased that I am actually a cosponsor of this particular legislation.

H.R. 2502 does provide for greater transparency to the taxpayers on the public buildings projects and leases. It actually would require the General Services Administration, or what we refer to as GSA, to include on its websites all project proposals and associated information and submit that to Congress under the Public Buildings Act for approval.

This is a simple action, but it can have a significant impact on improving the accountability and transparency that all American taxpayers yearn for.

While GSA includes some information on its website, that information provided is somewhat limited. This bill would ensure that taxpayers know what projects have been proposed, how much they will cost, and which have been actually approved.

In 2013 the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure began filling this void by posting this information on its website. Since that time the committee's website has become a critical resource not only for the public

and private sector but also for Federal agencies. However, to ensure the continuity and that this information continues to be regularly updated and maintained, this bill would place that responsibility on GSA.

□ 1615

As I mentioned, this is a common-sense, straightforward bill. I thank Chairman DEFAZIO and Ranking Member GRAVES for their willingness to address efficient and effective government agency.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. PALMER), the sponsor of this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES), the ranking member, and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) for their work on the issue, and Chairman DEFAZIO for his support.

The General Services Administration is required to submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure and to the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works prospectuses that contain information on proposed public projects for committee consideration.

In recent years, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, as has been mentioned, has posted this information about these projects on its website to provide access to the public and private entities. While the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has become a resource for the public, and even for Federal agencies, this bill, the Transparency in Federal Buildings Projects Act, would require the GSA to make publicly available on its website all prospectuses and associated information, pursuant to the Public Buildings Act.

This sensible reform will ensure that taxpayers have more information about how their hard-earned dollars are being spent and managed. The bill would strengthen transparency and accountability in Federal construction, renovation, and leasing projects, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I am assuming that the gentleman opposite is. As we close, I thank the chairman once again for his support, and I thank the sponsor of this particular bill.

We do believe that GSA, in posting this information in a searchable fashion, will provide for a more open and transparent government.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support that, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, in closing, again, I congratulate the gentleman from Alabama

(Mr. PALMER) for proposing this new transparency legislation. I am certain, in the end, it is ultimately going to save the taxpayers money and lead to GSA, perhaps, performing in a more efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2502.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERAN TREATMENT COURT COORDINATION ACT OF 2019

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 886) to direct the Attorney General to establish and carry out a Veteran Treatment Court Program, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 886

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 "Veteran Treatment Court Coordination Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that veterans treatment courts are a successful program aimed at helping veterans charged with non-violent crimes receive the help and the benefits for which the veterans are entitled.

SEC. 3. VETERAN TREATMENT COURT PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Subject to the availability of appropriations, in coordination with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Attorney General shall establish and carry out a Veteran Treatment Court Program to provide grants and technical assistance to court systems that—

(1) have adopted a Veterans Treatment Court Program; or

(2) have filed a notice of intent to establish a Veterans Treatment Court Program with the Secretary.

(b) PURPOSE.—The purpose of the Veterans Treatment Court Program established under subsection (a) is to ensure the Department of Justice has a single office to coordinate the provision of grants, training, and technical assistance to help State, local, and Tribal governments to develop and maintain veteran treatment courts.

(c) PROGRAMS INCLUDED.—The Veterans Treatment Court Program established under subsection (a) shall include the grant programs relating to veterans treatment courts carried out by the Attorney General pursuant to sections 2901, 2991, and 3021 of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10581, 10651, and 10701) or any other provision of law.

(d) REGULATIONS.—The Attorney General shall promulgate regulations to carry out this section.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support H.R. 886, the Veteran Treatment Court Coordination Act. This bill stands as a testament to the commitment Congress has to veterans, those who have service-connected mental health disabilities and become involved in the criminal justice system.

By establishing a grant program office called the Veteran Treatment Court Program Office in the Department of Justice, the bill makes permanent our support for the hundreds of local veteran treatment court programs around the country that successfully rehabilitate veterans.

The Veterans Treatment Court Program Office would build upon the success of the hundreds of veterans courts programs in the United States by standardizing data reporting methods, serving as a repository for resources, providing training to veterans court administrators, and distributing information nationwide on best practices on how to improve the administration of veterans courts.

Despite efforts to welcome veterans home and ease their transition to civilian life, many veterans continue to face hardships after completing their military service. One study reports that approximately 9 percent of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been arrested since returning home.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that approximately 180,000 veterans were incarcerated in State and Federal prisons between 2011 and 2012. Of those incarcerated veterans surveyed, 48 percent of veterans in prison and 55 percent of veterans in jail reported that they had been told by a mental health professional that they had a mental health disorder.

Veterans treatment courts can provide an effective means by which communities can rehabilitate veterans who commit crimes and support victims by ensuring veteran-defendants pay restitution before they may receive a dismissal or expungement.

Empirical studies show that veterans courts provide more effective means of rehabilitating justice-involved veterans. Although 20 percent of veterans court participants received jail sanctions during their participation in the veterans court program, only 14 percent experienced a new incarceration during an average of nearly 1 year in the program. This rate of recidivism is

substantially less than the 23 to 46 percent 1-year recidivism rate found among nonveteran prisoners. Most programs report less than five dropouts in the 2017 calendar year.

There are over 500 veteran treatment courts operated by State, local, and Tribal governments. This bill ensures existing programs will continue their mission to serve our veterans and make it easier for jurisdictions to start new veterans court programs and adopt best practices.

I thank our colleague, Representative CHARLIE CRIST, for his leadership in authoring this bill and for his continuing dedication to supporting our veterans.

This is a thoughtful and important bill that will help veterans who need our assistance.

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

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume. I appreciate the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS). She did a great job explaining this bill. This is an easy bill. This is one that we should come to. This is exactly why suspensions exist, to do something like this.

On a personal note, as a member of the Air Force Reserve, someone who has been both in the Navy and Air Force, serving in Iraq and others, this is something that is very good.

In my home of Hall County, Georgia, the veterans courts have been set up for several years now. We see the mentoring aspect, the peer activity, something that we gained in the military and something that is very important and vital for these individuals who have gone through run-ins with the law on many occasions, on different ideas, especially if it has to do with things that came out of their service. We owe them no greater debt than we do others, to make sure that they have a chance to get their lives back straight.

Veteran treatments court do that, and this coordination act puts the emphasis on it from a Federal level.

I could not think of a better way to start this week. Hopefully, holding a good bill together, that we could get this to the Senate as quickly as possible, and get it, even more importantly, to the President's desk so that it becomes more than a political statement but actually a law.

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

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CRIST).

Mr. CRIST. Mr. Speaker, after 9/11, thousands of America's best had to offer to sign up for our freedom. They served their country with honor to keep all of us here and our loved ones safe. Many of these heroes suffered greatly with wounds that you can see and, in many cases, wounds that you cannot.

Too many veterans face mental and physical disabilities. Too many vet-

erans come home without support structures. Too many veterans lack opportunities. And too many veterans self-medicate, find themselves in the criminal justice system, and are forgotten.

In 2008, the first veteran treatment court was established in Buffalo, New York. The idea is that veterans face unique challenges that require veteran-specific care.

While the VA can be an option for a veteran in crisis, including at the C.W. Bill Young Medical Center in my district, not every veteran in crisis goes to the VA, and if they do, they may not have somebody to check on them and make sure they are okay.

Veterans treatment courts are diversion programs. Working with justice outreach specialists at their local VA medical centers, social workers and counselors at the local level, and veterans service organizations, vet courts get nonviolent veterans who qualify into treatment and counseling instead of just locking them up.

After they complete the requirements, the veteran can even have their record expunged, preserving housing and employment opportunities.

Just over 10 years after the first court, there are now hundreds all around the country, including one in my home of Pinellas County, Florida.

Each vet court is different, starting in the community from scratch and coordinating the people and organizations that will help rehabilitate veterans in their program.

Congress, recognizing the importance of these courts in our districts, has provided funding for vet courts for a few years now, including a record \$25 million in the House-passed Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

However, unlike other justice grant programs, like juvenile justice programs, there is still not adequate coordination at the Department of Justice to provide best practices, support, as well as technical assistance to communities that have vet court or want to start one.

The Veteran Treatment Court Coordination Act fixes this, establishing the Veteran Treatment Court Program in the Office of Justice Programs.

I am thankful to my colleagues on the Committee on Appropriations, of which I am a member, particularly the gentlewoman from New York, Chairwoman LOWEY, and the gentleman from New York, Chairman SERRANO, for their steadfast support of the veteran treatment court funding.

However, the Department of Justice, which administers the grants, needs an office dedicated to helping and guiding communities that want to access grants or want to set up their own veterans court.

I thank the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK) for her work over this past year, as well as the gentleman from New York, Chairman NADLER, and the gentlewoman from California, Chairwoman BASS, for their

leadership on the Committee on the Judiciary, fighting for criminal justice reforms as well as diversion programs.

Lastly, I thank all the organizations, both veterans service organizations and criminal justice professionals, that have helped build support for this over the past 2 years and that have worked tirelessly in our districts to make veterans treatment courts so successful.

This includes the National Military and Veterans Alliance, the National Veterans Court Alliance, and the National District Attorneys Association, all of which have endorsed the legislation, along with 19 veteran groups total.

When a veteran suffering because of their service makes a mistake, we have a duty as a country to do all we can to give them the very best possible outcome. We have a duty to fight for those who fought for our freedoms.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, if the gentlewoman has no more speakers, I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill. I appreciate everybody and all the hard work that has gone into it.

When we take time to come together and lock arms to do these kinds of bills, these are things that actually move the needle for people back home, the reason we are here. This is very easy to support. This should be a simple voice vote. Get it done, and get this done.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman from California, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member for his brevity.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would help provide support to more than 1 million veterans diagnosed with service-connected disabilities, as well as the thousands who are undiagnosed who have been and will be exposed to the criminal justice system.

Supporting rehabilitative veterans courts programs is the least we can do to acknowledge their sacrifice and treat our veterans involved with the criminal justice system with compassion and care.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN of Puerto Rico. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in strong support of H.R. 886, the Veteran Treatment Court Coordination Act of 2019.

Our men and women in uniform often struggle with physical and mental remnants of their time in service. According to the VA, over 1.7 million veterans received treatment through a VA mental health specialty program in 2018.

Additionally, close to 20 percent of service members returning from Iraq or Afghanistan experience depression or have a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis.

Mr. Speaker, we want our veterans to thrive. They listened to their Nation's call and served when needed. It is now our responsibility to address every single issue that stops them

from living a full life and continue to contribute to their country as a civilian.

Veterans' Treatment Courts are a valuable tool that assists veterans facing non-violent criminal charges resulting from mental illness, substance abuse or other adverse behavior.

They provide alternatives at the state and county level that focus on rehabilitation and reintegration in part by facilitating programs that provide support and resources to veterans.

H.R. 886 directs the Department of Justice to establish a Veterans Treatment Court Program that provides grants and technical assistance for local governments to develop and maintain veteran treatment courts.

State circuits that have either adopted a Veterans Treatment Court or have filed a notice of intent to establish a Veterans Treatment Court would be eligible.

I am a proud cosponsor of this bill. I genuinely believe veterans are an asset to our communities and as such should be given all available help and assistance.

I thank my colleague, Mr. CRIST from Florida for his leadership on this issue and encourage my colleagues to vote in favor.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 886, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1630

PREVENTING ONLINE SALES OF E-CIGARETTES TO CHILDREN ACT

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3942) to apply requirements relating to delivery sales of cigarettes to delivery sales of electronic nicotine delivery systems, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3942

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 "Preventing Online Sales of E-Cigarettes to Children Act".

SEC. 2. AMENDMENTS TO THE JENKINS ACT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Act entitled "An Act to assist States in collecting sales and use taxes on cigarettes", approved October 19, 1949 (commonly known as the "Jenkins Act") (15 U.S.C. 375 et seq.), is amended—

(1) in section 1 (15 U.S.C. 375)—

(A) in paragraph (2)(A)(ii)—

(i) by striking "includes roll-your-own tobacco" and inserting the following: "includes—

"(I) roll-your-own tobacco";

(ii) in subclause (I), as so designated, by striking the period at the end and inserting "; and"; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

"(II) an electronic nicotine delivery system.";

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (7) through (14) as paragraphs (8) through (15), respectively; and

(C) by inserting after paragraph (6) the following:

"(7) ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEM.—The term 'electronic nicotine delivery system'—

"(A) means any electronic device that, through an aerosolized solution, delivers nicotine, flavor, or any other substance to the user inhaling from the device;

"(B) includes—

"(i) an e-cigarette;

"(ii) an e-hookah;

"(iii) an e-cigar;

"(iv) a vape pen;

"(v) an advanced refillable personal vaporizer;

"(vi) an electronic pipe; and

"(vii) any component, liquid, part, or accessory of a device described in subparagraph (A), without regard to whether the component, liquid, part, or accessory is sold separately from the device; and

"(C) does not include a product that is—

"(i) approved by the Food and Drug Administration for—

"(I) sale as a tobacco cessation product; or

"(II) any other therapeutic purpose; and

"(ii) marketed and sold solely for a purpose described in clause (i)."; and

(2) in section 2A(b)(1) (15 U.S.C. 376a(b)(1)), by inserting "NICOTINE/" after "CIGARETTES".

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section, and the amendments made by this section, shall take effect on the date that is 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 3. NONMAILABILITY OF ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS.

(a) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the United States Postal Service shall promulgate regulations to clarify the applicability of the prohibition on mailing of cigarettes under section 1716E of title 18, United States Code, to electronic nicotine delivery systems, in accordance with the amendment to the definition of "cigarette" made by section 2.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The prohibition on mailing of cigarettes under section 1716E of title 18, United States Code, shall apply to electronic nicotine delivery systems on and after the date on which the United States Postal Service promulgates regulations under subsection (a) of this section.

SEC. 4. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. BASS) and the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. ARMSTRONG) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.