

regardless of the veteran's disability rating. This bill makes an important correction ensuring that all spouses of service-disabled veterans retain Federal contracting preference as a service-disabled veteran-owned small business no matter the severity of that veteran's injury.

This will give surviving spouses the opportunity to remain competitive in the Federal contracting market and help ensure that businesses are not upended after the death of their veteran spouse.

I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their cooperation on this issue and commitment to the families and spouses of our veterans. Caring for our Nation's heroes should never be a partisan issue. I urge the House to support this legislation.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, this commonsense bill fixes an oversight by Congress to align the way the Federal Government treats the surviving spouse of a service-disabled veteran-owned small business. The bill simply aligns title 15, the Small Business Act, with title 38, ensuring continuity across the government for this important policy.

This bill will provide our Nation's heroes and their families with peace of mind. I urge this bill's adoption, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, both the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Small Business Administration value the sacrifices of America's veterans and, in particular, we note today, service-disabled veterans who remain committed to their country by starting small firms.

In that vein, the VA and the SBA have contracting preferences for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses. Despite the success of these programs, neither adequately address what happens when the service-disabled veteran owner dies. The death of a loved one by itself, an already devastating event, is compounded by needing to attend to the duties of running his or her small business and it is often debilitating.

The sudden death of a veteran whose small business relies upon a contracting preference takes a toll on the spouse of the deceased veteran, the business operations, and the business' employees.

H.R. 499 establishes much-needed certainty by rectifying inherently critical oversight. Setting forth the rules by which a surviving spouse can retain the service-disabled veteran-owned small business status honors the dedication of the veteran, the surviving spouse, and their business.

The government has a responsibility to ensure those who give so much to their country have the opportunity for their small business passions to survive and prosper, even upon death.

I urge my colleagues to support the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 499.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR RESERVISTS AND VETERANS ACT

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3734) to require the Comptroller General of the United States to report on access to credit for small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals, to require the Administrator of the Small Business Administration to report on the veterans interagency task force, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3734

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 "Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans Act" or the "SERV Act".

SEC. 2. REPORTING REQUIREMENT FOR VETERANS INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE.

Section 32(c) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657b(c)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(4) REPORT.—Along with the budget justification documents for the Small Business Administration submitted to Congress in connection with the budget for a fiscal year submitted under 1105 of title 31, United States Code, the Administrator shall submit a report—

"(A) discussing the appointments made to and activities of the task force; and

"(B) identifying and outlining a plan for outreach and promotion of the programs and services for veterans, including Veteran Business Outreach Centers, Boots to Business, Boots to Business Reboot, Service-Disabled Entrepreneurship Development Training Program, Veteran Institute for Procurement, Women Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Program, and Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship.".

SEC. 3. GAO REPORT ON ACCESS TO CREDIT.

(a) REPORT ON ACCESS TO CREDIT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report on the ability of small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals to access credit to—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Small Business of the House of Representatives.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include, to the extent practicable, an analysis of—

(A) the sources of credit used by small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals and the average percentage of the credit obtained from each source by such concerns;

(B) the default rate for small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals, disaggregated by each source of credit described in subparagraph (A), as compared to the default rate for the source of credit for small business concerns generally;

(C) the Federal lending programs available to provide credit to small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals;

(D) gaps, if any, in the availability of credit for small business concerns owned and controlled by covered individuals that are not being filled by the Federal Government or private sources;

(E) obstacles faced by covered individuals in trying to access credit;

(F) the extent to which deployment and other military responsibilities affect the credit history of veterans and Reservists; and

(G) the extent to which covered individuals are aware of Federal programs targeted towards helping covered individuals access credit.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) COVERED INDIVIDUAL.—The term "covered individual" means—

(A) a veteran;

(B) a service-disabled veteran;

(C) a Reservist;

(D) the spouse of an individual described in subparagraph (A), (B), or (C); or

(E) the spouse of a member of the Armed Forces.

(2) RESERVIST.—The term "Reservist" means a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces, as described in section 10101 of title 10, United States Code.

(3) SMALL BUSINESS ACT DEFINITIONS.—The terms "service-disabled veteran", "small business concern", and "veteran" have the meanings given those terms, respectively, under section 3 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3734, the Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists, or SERV Act.

The SBA offers several programs to help aspiring and existing veteran entrepreneurs launch and grow their small businesses. But as valuable as they are, more must be done to promote these programs to guarantee that our veterans are aware of them and utilizing them.

The Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development was established to do just that. The task force is chaired by the SBA and is comprised of representatives appointed by the SBA's administrator from a variety of agencies, including: the SBA's Office of Veterans Business Development, Department of Defense, Department of Labor, Department of the Treasury, Veterans' Affairs, General Services Administration, Office of Management and Budget, and four representatives from veterans service and military organizations.

The task force is charged with coordinating efforts to improve capital access, business development, and contracting goals for veterans. Unfortunately, it hasn't filed an annual report since fiscal year 2015. This delay is wholly unacceptable on its face. Considering we heard from veterans about the needs for more outreach and coordination of business services, it only makes the delay more painful.

Today's legislation requires the SBA administrator to report annually on the appointments made, highlighting the activities of and plan for outreach and engagement by the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development.

Annual reporting will give Congress the visibility over the task force responsible for serving our veterans at SBA and the ability to provide proper oversight. Gathering a regular snapshot of the program will enable Congress to make modifications where they are needed in a timely fashion.

I want to thank Ms. DAVIDS and Ranking Member CHABOT for their collaboration on this bill. I urge Members to support this bipartisan legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3734, the Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans Act or the SERV Act.

Veteran-owned small businesses are some of the Nation's most innovative companies. They are nimble and move quickly as markets change directions. The resources that are available to our veteran-owned small businesses should be as effective and as efficient as the owners themselves.

The SERV Act requires the SBA to outline the agency's veteran outreach plans and veteran promotion plans to Congress. Additionally, H.R. 3734, requires the Government Accountability Office to evaluate credit availability of veteran, service-disabled veteran, and reservist-owned small businesses.

I want to thank the gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. DAVIDS) for working with me in a bipartisan manner on this legislation. I also want to thank Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ for advancing this commonsense legislation that will assist veterans as they work to launch and build strong small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the SERV Act which was favor-

ably reported out of committee by voice vote, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Kansas (Ms. DAVIDS), my good friend and cosponsor of this bill.

Ms. DAVIDS of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend and colleague from Illinois for yielding.

The first thing I would like to do is thank Chairwoman VELÁZQUEZ and Ranking Member CHABOT for continuing the Small Business Committee's bipartisan efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3734, the Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans Act, or the SERV Act, which I introduced with Ranking Member CHABOT.

This bipartisan piece of legislation helps veteran business owners succeed by studying the barriers they face, including lack of access to capital and credit. It also helps ensure that veterans are aware of all of the resources available to them through the Small Business Administration.

I was fortunate enough to spend this past weekend on Veterans Day at home in the district I represent in Kansas. I was meeting the brave men and women who have served our country and was hearing about the issues and opportunities that they have.

After everything our veterans have done for us, we must have their backs. They deserve nothing less than access to jobs, healthcare, and the services that they deserve.

That includes the ability to start and grow a small business. Veterans possess many of the leadership and entrepreneurial skills to start and grow small businesses, but they face unique challenges, including difficulty accessing capital and credit.

Since it is tough to accumulate the type of credit needed to start a business during your time in service, those issues are exactly what the SERV Act is intending to address. The SERV Act requires a report from the Comptroller General of the United States on the ability of veteran and reservist small business owners to access credit.

The report will include new information and analysis on the sources of credit that veterans and other reservists use to start and maintain their businesses, as well as how deployment and other military responsibilities affect a veteran's and reservist's credit.

Studying the problem of access to credit for veterans and reservists is a crucial first step in finding the right solutions. This legislation also helps connect veterans to existing programs in the Small Business Administration that are aimed at helping veterans transition their military skills from service to business, like Veteran Business Outreach Centers, Boots to Business, or the Service-Disabled Entrepreneurship Development Training.

These programs provide vital resources for veterans, but they are only

useful if veterans know about them. Without understanding the programs, veterans are not going to be able to access them.

That is why the SERV Act requires the Interagency Task Force on Veterans Small Business Development to develop a plan for outreach and promotion of these incredible programs.

The task force is responsible for coordinating Federal efforts to improve capital access, business development, and contracting opportunities for veteran and service-disabled small businesses. But the task force has not submitted a report to Congress since 2015. That is why the SERV Act would require an annual report to Congress on its appointments and to outline its plan for outreach on the many programs available to veterans, service-disabled veterans, reservists, and their spouses.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the SERV Act and help set our veteran entrepreneurs up for success.

□ 1330

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

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, veteran-owned small businesses deserve the resources that will prepare them for future growth.

In order to improve our capital access programs for our Nation's veteran-owned businesses, we must fully understand what they are facing when seeking access to affordable and reliable capital. This bipartisan bill will provide future Congresses with a better picture of what is available to them and what is not and where we can plug the gaps for them.

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

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Assisting entrepreneurs requires integrated, comprehensive solutions that leverage a combination of government and private efforts. Despite progress we have made, hundreds of thousands of veterans and their families continue to struggle, demonstrating how much more must be done.

The interagency veterans task force is a critical part of this effort, and we must hold agencies accountable for ensuring they are meeting the duties placed upon them to maximize outreach to our servicemembers. H.R. 3734 does just this by requiring regular reporting by the task force to gather snapshots of programmatic outreach and education to veterans.

It also asks the Government Accountability Office to study the many issues raised by veteran entrepreneurs facing difficulty accessing credit so that this body can better understand the financing needs of veterans. Doing so enables us to take additional steps to ease the burdens of not just transitioning back to civilian life, but also risking more to start a business.

It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that resources reach the veterans

and servicemembers held in such high regard.

I sincerely thank Ms. DAVIDS for spearheading this bill and working with Ranking Member CHABOT to make certain we hold agencies, through the task force, accountable.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SCHNEIDER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3734, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

VERIFICATION ALIGNMENT AND SERVICE-DISABLED BUSINESS ADJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1615) to transfer the responsibility of verifying small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans or service-disabled veterans to the Small Business Administration, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1615

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the “Verification Alignment and Service-disabled Business Adjustment Act” or the “VA-SBA Act”.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Transfer date.
- Sec. 3. Amendment to and transfer of veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned business database.
- Sec. 4. Additional requirements for database.
- Sec. 5. Procurement program for small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans.
- Sec. 6. Certification for small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans.
- Sec. 7. Status of self-certified small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans.
- Sec. 8. Transfer of the Center for Verification and Evaluation of the Department of Veterans Affairs to the Small Business Administration.
- Sec. 9. Report.
- Sec. 10. Determination of budgetary effects.

SEC. 2. TRANSFER DATE.

For purposes of this Act, the term “transfer date” means the date that is 2 years after

the date of enactment of this Act, except that such date may be extended an unlimited number of times by a period of not more than 6 months if the Administrator of the Small Business Administration and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs jointly issue a notice to Congress and the Law Revision Counsel of the House of Representatives containing—

(1) a certification that such extension is necessary;

(2) the rationale for and the length of such extension; and

(3) a plan to comply with the requirements of this Act within the timeframe of the extension.

SEC. 3. AMENDMENT TO AND TRANSFER OF VETERAN-OWNED AND SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS DATABASE.

(a) AMENDMENT OF VETERAN-OWNED AND SERVICE-DISABLED VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESS DATABASE.—Effective on the transfer date, section 8127 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (e)—

(A) by striking “the Secretary” and inserting “the Administrator”; and

(B) by striking “subsection (f)” and inserting “section 36 of the Small Business Act”;

(2) in subsection (f)—

(A) by striking “the Secretary” each place such term appears, other than in the last place such term appears under paragraph (2)(A), and inserting “the Administrator”;

(B) in paragraph (1), by striking “small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans with service-connected disabilities” each place such term appears and inserting “small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans”;

(C) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking “to access” and inserting “to obtain from the Secretary of Veterans Affairs”; and

(ii) by striking subparagraph (B) and inserting the following:

“(B) For purposes of this subsection—

“(i) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

“(I) verify an individual’s status as a veteran or a service-disabled veteran; and

“(II) establish a system to permit the Administrator to access, but not alter, such verification; and

“(ii) the Administrator shall verify—

“(I) the status of a business concern as a small business concern; and

“(II) the ownership and control of such business concern.

“(C) The Administrator may not certify a concern under subsection (b) or section 36A if the Secretary of Veterans Affairs cannot provide the verification described under subparagraph (B)(i)(I).”;

(D) by striking paragraphs (4) and (7);

(E) by redesignating paragraphs (5) and (6) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respectively, and redesignating paragraph (8) as paragraph (6);

(F) in paragraph (4), as so redesignated, by striking “The Secretary” and inserting “The Administrator”; and

(G) in paragraph (6), as so redesignated—

(i) in subparagraph (A)—

(I) by striking “verify the status of the concern as a small business concern or the ownership or control of the concern” and inserting “certify the status of the concern as a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans (under section 36A) or a small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans (under section 36(g))”; and

(II) by striking “verification” and inserting “certification”;

(ii) in subparagraph (B)—

(I) in clause (i), by striking “small business concern owned and controlled by veterans

with service-connected disabilities” and inserting “small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans”; and

(II) in clause (ii)—

(aa) by amending subclause (I) to read as follows:

“(I) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Administrator; or”; and

(bb) in subclause (II), by striking “the contracting officer of the Department” and inserting “the applicable contracting officer”; and

(iii) by striking subparagraph (C);

(3) by redesignating subsection (k) (relating to definitions) as subsection (l);

(4) by inserting after subsection (j) (relating to annual reports) the following:

“(k) ANNUAL TRANSFER FOR CERTIFICATION COSTS.—For each fiscal year, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall reimburse the Administrator in an amount necessary to cover any cost incurred by the Administrator for certifying small business concerns owned and controlled by veterans that do not qualify as small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans for the Secretary for purposes of this section and section 8128 of this title. The Administrator is authorized to accept such reimbursement. The amount of any such reimbursement shall be determined jointly by the Secretary and the Administrator and shall be provided from fees collected by the Secretary under multiple-award schedule contracts. Any disagreement about the amount shall be resolved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.”; and

(5) subsection (1) (relating to definitions), as so redesignated, by adding at the end the following:

“(4) The term Administrator means the Administrator of the Small Business Administration.”.

(b) TRANSFER OF REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO DATABASE TO THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT.—Effective on the transfer date, subsection (f) of section 8127 of title 38, United States Code (as amended by subsection (a)), is transferred to section 36 of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 657f), inserted so as to appear after subsection (e).

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—The following amendments shall take effect on the transfer date:

(1) SMALL BUSINESS ACT.—Section 3(q)(2)(C)(i)(III) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632(q)(2)(C)(i)(III)) is amended by striking “section 8127(f) of title 38, United States Code” and inserting “section 36”.

(2) TITLE 38.—Section 8128 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking “section 8127(f) of this title” and inserting “section 36 of the Small Business Act”.

SEC. 4. ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR DATABASE.

(a) ADMINISTRATION ACCESS TO DATABASE BEFORE THE TRANSFER DATE.—During the period between the date of the enactment of this Act and the transfer date, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide the Administrator of the Small Business Administration with access to the contents of the database described under section 8127(f) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this Act or the amendments made by this Act may be construed—

(1) as prohibiting the Administrator of the Small Business Administration from combining the contents of the database described under section 8127(f) of title 38, United States Code, with other databases maintained by the Administration; or

(2) as requiring the Administrator to use any system or technology related to the database described under section 8127(f) of title 38, United States Code, on or after the