

down on paper and making it happen in real life, and we were seeing huge numbers of disabled veterans not take advantage of this program either because they didn't know about it or because the process of applying for it was just too burdensome, there was too much paperwork, or it took too long.

If you have a 100 percent disability rating, there is a lot in your life you have to worry about besides doing paperwork; so Congressman WATKINS, Congressman FITZPATRICK and another great western Pennsylvanian, Congressman GUY RESCHENTHALER, and I were all looking at the same set of facts and said: We know what we need to do here. We already know these people have a 100 percent disability rating. Let's just make the loan forgiveness automatic. That was the genesis for this bill.

I want to acknowledge that the administration and President Trump did the right thing here. They noticed this same problem last year, and they began to automatically forgive these loans by executive order. The problem was that there was some legal uncertainty about exactly who had the authority to forgive the loans how fast and when.

Our understanding is that some disputes developed between OMB and the Department of Education, and it was slowing down the ability of veterans to take advantage of this thing that they are already entitled to by virtue of how much they have given to this country. So our bill was necessary to make sure that everybody involved knew they have the legal authority to forgive these loans.

By this time next year, assuming we are able to get this through the Senate and to the President's desk for his signature, that number you heard from Congressman COURTNEY of 25,000 veterans whose loans are in default and an even higher number of tens of thousands more who haven't taken advantage of that should be zero.

We are making an unequivocal statement today that, if you have given so much to this country that you have a 100 percent disability rating, you do not need to worry about your Federal student loans any longer.

It is our job to remove obstacles from the paths of people who have given so much to this country. We all believe that there is much to be done on the subject of student loans, but what we want to make sure is that these brave Americans are first in line when we do that, and that is what our bill does.

It is very common in America these days to hear people spot a veteran and say, "Thank you for your service." I think the important thing about this bill is that it is Republicans and Democrats, Congress and the President all working together to say, "Thank you for your service"—not only in words, but in actions. That is what this bill means.

I am so grateful to have had the support of so many hardworking Members

who look forward to seeing this bill pass today, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Mr. WATKINS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK).

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, the FREED Vets Act mandates that the Department of Education automatically discharge Federal student loan debt for eligible permanently disabled veterans. The staggering student loan debt crisis harms the financial security of many Americans, including the women and men who have honorably served our Nation.

Our Nation's veterans have sacrificed immensely for our freedom and our way of life, and it is unacceptable that many disabled veterans continue to be saddled with high levels of student debt. The least we can do for them, Mr. Speaker, is to forgive the Federal student loans for those who have served our country.

The VA established a program in 2018 to forgive veteran student debt, but the barrier of going through the processes meant that only 20 percent of those eligible veterans received the assistance they deserved. This strong bipartisan bill makes student loan forgiveness for these vets automatic.

I thank my friend, Congressman LAMB from Pennsylvania, for leading this bill, and I urge all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to stand with our veterans today and vote for H.R. 3598.

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

I thank the President for all he has done for our veterans. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. LAMB) as well as the gentlewoman from Nevada (Mrs. LEE) for all of their hard work in making this piece of legislation a reality.

I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on H.R. 3598.

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

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As my colleagues have heard today, this legislation would require the Department to continue ensuring that veterans who are totally and permanently disabled can have their student loan debt discharged without unnecessary complexity.

Think about it, without unnecessary complexity.

All this legislation does is streamline a process so those who have been totally and permanently disabled can have peace of mind and economic freedom. We owe it to those who have served our country to make this process as simple as possible, and I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COURTNEY). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Nevada (Mrs. LEE) that the House sus-

pend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3598, 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.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 27 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1530

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mrs. DEMINGS) at 3 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed. Votes will be taken in the following order:

- Suspending the rules and:
- Agreeing to H. Res. 756; and
- Agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Pursuant to clause 9 of rule XX, remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

MOVING OUR DEMOCRACY AND CONGRESSIONAL OPERATIONS TOWARDS MODERNIZATION RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 756) implementing recommendations adopted by the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, as amended.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 395, nays 13, not voting 21, as follows:

[Roll No. 93]

YEAS—395

Abraham	Amodei	Balderson
Adams	Armstrong	Banks
Aderholt	Arrington	Barr
Aguilar	Axne	Barragán
Allen	Babin	Bass
Allred	Bacon	Beatty
Amash	Baird	Bera