

on a study colloquium for a doctoral dissertation writing. Rev. Vivian spent the rest of preaching developing social change programs and being engaged in activities designed to help make the work a better place in which to live. Living during the same time as Rev. C.T. Vivian and knowing him and his work has been gratifying and inspirational.

He was a great contributor to positive change in America and may he rest in peace.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. BEN RAY LUJÁN

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 22, 2020

Mr. LUJÁN. Madam Speaker, during rollcall vote No. 148 on H.R. 6395, I mistakenly recorded my vote as Yes when I should have voted No.

WILLIAM M. (MAC) THORNBERRY NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2021

SPEECH OF

HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 20, 2020

Mr. DeFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I will vote in support of H.R. 6395, the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. Make no mistake: I have opposed NDAA legislation in previous years, and I still have concerns about a number of provisions included in this year's legislation, but this year's Democratic-led legislation also contains numerous policy priorities that I strongly support.

First, this legislation grants our men and women in uniform a well-deserved pay raise of 3 percent. This is the very least we can do for those who continue to make extraordinary sacrifices for our country.

As Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I fought to successfully include vital provisions important to Oregon coastal communities. This includes the Maritime Transportation System Emergency Relief Act, which authorizes the Maritime Administration to provide financial assistance to stabilize and ensure the reliable functioning of the U.S. Maritime Transportation System in the event of a national emergency or disaster, as well as the Elijah E. Cummings Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2020, legislation to authorize funds for, reinforce, and support the United States Coast Guard.

Given the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's jurisdiction over the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I am proud that this legislation makes a long-overdue correction to ensure that the more than 45,000 FAA employees, as well as VA and other federal civilian employees who were inexcusably left out of last year's bill, receive twelve weeks of paid parental leave. I am also pleased that this legislation prohibits the Department of Defense from excluding any civilian employees from their collective bargaining rights.

As a long-time advocate for strengthening Congress's constitutional authority to declare

war and limiting executive authority to engage in armed conflict without Congress's consent, I strongly support this bill's provisions to prohibit U.S. participation in the Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen without congressional authorization. I also voted in strong support of an amendment which was adopted to prohibit President Trump's dangerous and unnecessary proposals to initiate new nuclear weapons testing.

Given President Trump's ongoing and disturbing use of force on peaceful protesters exercising their First Amendment rights—including his use of National Guard service members to quell peaceful protesters outside the White House—I am pleased that an amendment which I voted for, and which was adopted, will add crucial oversight and transparency guardrails when a President deploys active duty military within the United States. I am also a strong supporter of this legislation's provision to require federal law enforcement officers deployed in response to public protests to visibly display their name and agency on their uniform. This requirement is especially crucial given Trump's appalling use of unidentifiable federal agents and unmarked vehicles to detain peaceful protesters in Portland, Oregon.

I am pleased this legislation includes provisions to bolster our country's COVID-19 response, including granting important funding for the Maritime Security Program (MSP) to enable MSP carriers to keep their ships fully crewed despite the lack of cargo as a result of COVID-19. To further increase our country's pandemic preparedness and response, this legislation establishes a Pandemic Preparedness and Resilience National Security Fund and provides additional funding to the Department of Defense's (DOD's) Cooperative Threat Reduction Program to focus on detecting and confronting biological threats. I also strongly support an amendment—which I cosponsored—to ensure the president finally uses the Defense Production Act to its full extent in order to meet our country's most critical needs to combat COVID-19, including securing vital personal protective equipment, testing supplies, and more for our frontline healthcare workers and citizens in Oregon and across the country.

Furthermore, this legislation accelerates the closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility by lifting a restriction on transfer of current detainees. This unnecessary prison—estimated to be the most expensive in the world—costs approximately \$540 million each year to house 40 prisoners and has been used as a top recruiting tool by terrorists. This prison has been a black eye for the U.S., eroding relationships with our allies, undermining U.S. missions abroad, and putting U.S. troops and citizens at risk of retaliation.

While Congress must do much more to achieve racial justice in this country, H.R. 6395 takes first steps to move closer to this goal. I am pleased that H.R. 6395 takes the long-overdue action of requiring the DOD to change the names of all military bases and infrastructure named for Confederate individuals within one year, prohibits display of the Confederate flag on DOD installations, and adds diversity requirements for DOD military and civilian personnel.

This legislation includes hundreds-of-millions in funding for the construction of additional housing and barracks for training and enlisted

personnel, as well as for oversight and improvement of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative (MHPI) program. The bill also includes a number of provisions to support the education of military dependent students, childcare services for military dependent children, and maternity uniforms for pregnant servicemembers. The NDAA also continues Congress's work to address the military's culture of sexual misconduct by including provisions to enhance the prevention of and response to incidents of sexual trauma.

Far too many of our veterans, especially those that served in Iraq and Afghanistan, are grappling with the serious medical complications linked to burn pits. While I believe Congress can and must do more to care for these veterans, I am pleased that this legislation takes modest steps to improve the identification of and care for veterans exposed to burn pits.

I am also pleased this bill includes provisions to assist student loan borrowers who have privately held debt, providing \$10,000 in immediate assistance to pay down the student loan. These students received no financial relief under the CARES Act. This provision will ensure the 200,000 servicemembers who owe nearly \$3 billion in student loan debt receive some form of student debt relief during the pandemic.

This bill includes necessary provisions that help to address PFAS and PFOA contamination on military bases that pose a public health threat to our military members and Americans living near installations. It requires the DOD to make public vital information about the level of PFAS contaminates in drinking water and groundwater at these sites. Although more can always be done to protect our environment, the bill makes an effort to fund climate change research initiatives and includes several public lands bills that will help to preserve and protect parts of America's wilderness for generations to come. It also makes strides toward protecting our most spectacular natural treasures, like ensuring the area around the Grand Canyon will not be polluted or scarred by mining.

While I strongly support many provisions in this year's NDAA, I believe this legislation should have included additional provisions to rein in our bloated and wasteful defense spending, take back Congress's constitutional war powers authority, and more.

I believe this legislation could have made responsible cuts to our defense budget without jeopardizing the safety of our troops or undermining our national security. For years, Congress has continued to increase the Pentagon's budget despite overwhelming evidence of its waste and abuse of taxpayer money. That's why I supported an amendment to responsibly reduce the Pentagon budget while retaining exceptions to protect service members, civilian employees, and the vital Defense Health Program from this reduction.

In particular, I have always opposed the DOD's Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) account, a fiscally irresponsible fund that is not counted in the budget, recklessly adds to our mounting debt, and has no congressional/oversight. OCO is a Pentagon slush fund that gives a blank check to fund endless wars that Congress hasn't authorized. I will continue fighting to finally eliminate this irresponsible fund.

I have long supported a financial audit of the Pentagon. Unlike every other federal