

current time limit for appeals has expired. Retroactive benefits will be paid to veterans whose appeal results in a favorable decision. The Board of Veterans' Appeals will be required to review these cases.

Mr. Speaker, during the years 1991 through 1995, 3,600 motions to reconsider Board of Veterans' Appeals decisions were filed, but only 22 percent were granted. The other 78 percent of veterans who believe they had been wronged were denied a hearing on that appeal.

We must keep our promises to our veterans. There are many veterans whose claims have been denied due to an error in the decision making process. This bill will allow us to correct the wrongs that many of these veterans have endured. I thank all the chairs and the ranking members for bringing this bill today, and I urge my colleagues to approve H.R. 1483.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1483 revising veterans benefits decisions based on clear and unmistakable error.

I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. EVANS, for introducing this bill as well as Chairman STUMP and Ranking Member MONTGOMERY for their support of this measure.

H.R. 1483 will amend current law to ensure that benefit decisions by both VA regional offices and the Board of Veterans' Appeals are subject to review on the grounds of clear and unmistakable error.

The intention of this legislation is make the consideration of appeals based on clear and unmistakable errors less burdensome and to ensure just results in cases where such error has occurred.

The Department of Veterans Affairs believes that this legislation will streamline its claims adjudication process, and will result in a more efficient and economical claims administration as well as savings in general operating expenses.

I believe that this legislation provides needed assistance to those veterans who have filed claims and I urge my colleagues to give it their support.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WICKER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1483.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VETERANS' BENEFITS AMENDMENTS OF 1996

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3373) to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve certain veterans' benefits programs, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3373

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Veterans' Benefits Amendments of 1996".

(b) REFERENCES.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment is expressed in terms of an amendment to a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—INSURANCE REFORM

SEC. 101. MERGER OF RETIRED RESERVE SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE AND VETERANS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE AND EXTENSION OF VETERANS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE TO MEMBERS OF THE READY RESERVE.

(a) DEFINITION OF MEMBER.—Section 1965(5) is amended—

(1) by inserting "and" at the end of subparagraph (B);

(2) by striking out subparagraphs (C) and (D); and

(3) by redesignating subparagraph (E) as subparagraph (C).

(b) PERSONS INSURED.—Section 1967 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by inserting "and" at the end of paragraph (1);

(B) by striking out paragraphs (3) and (4); and

(C) by striking out "or the first day a member of the Reserves, whether or not assigned to the Retired Reserve of a uniformed service, meets the qualifications of section 1965(5)(C) of this title, or the first day a member of the Reserves meets the qualifications of section 1965(5)(D) of this title,"; and

(2) by striking out subsection (d).

(c) DURATION AND TERMINATION OF COVERAGE.—Section 1968 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by striking out "subparagraph (B), (C), or (D) of section 1965(5)" and inserting in lieu thereof "section 1965(5)(B)";

(B) by striking out the period at the end of paragraphs (1) and (2) and inserting in lieu thereof a semicolon;

(C) by striking out the period at the end of paragraph (3) and inserting in lieu thereof "and";

(D) in paragraph (4)—

(i) by striking out "from such" in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) and all that follows through "(A) unless on" and inserting in lieu thereof "from such assignment, unless on";

(ii) by striking out the semicolon after "such assignment" and inserting in lieu thereof a period; and

(iii) by striking out subparagraphs (B) and (C); and

(E) by striking out paragraphs (5) and (6); and

(2) in subsection (b), by striking out the last two sentences.

(d) PREMIUMS.—Section 1969 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2), by striking out "is assigned to the Reserve (other than the Retired Reserve) and meets the qualifications of section 1965(5)(C) of this title, or is assigned to the Retired Reserve and meets the qualifications of section 1965(5)(D) of this title,";

(2) by striking out subsection (e); and

(3) by redesignating subsections (f) and (g) as subsections (e) and (f), respectively.

SEC. 102. CONVERSION TO COMMERCIAL LIFE INSURANCE POLICY.

(a) SGLI CONVERSION.—Subsection (b) of section 1968, as amended by section 101(c)(2), is amended—

(1) by inserting "(1)" after "(b)" at the beginning of the subsection;

(2) by striking out "would cease," in the first sentence and all that follows through the period at the end of the sentence and inserting in lieu thereof "would cease—

"(A) shall be automatically converted to Veterans' Group Life Insurance, subject to (i) the timely payment of the initial premium under terms prescribed by the Secretary, and (ii) the terms and conditions set forth in section 1977 of this title; or

"(B) at the election of the member, shall be converted to an individual policy of insurance as described in section 1977(e) of this title upon written application for conversion made to the participating company selected by the member and payment of the required premiums."; and

(3) by designating the second sentence as paragraph (2) and in that sentence striking out "Such automatic conversion" and inserting in lieu thereof "Automatic conversion to Veterans' Group Life Insurance under paragraph (1)".

(b) VGLI CONVERSION.—Section 1977 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by inserting "(1)" after "(a)";

(B) by striking out the last two sentences; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

"(2) If any person insured under Veterans' Group Life Insurance again becomes insured under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance but dies before terminating or converting such person's Veterans' Group Insurance, Veterans' Group Life Insurance shall be payable only if such person is insured for less than \$200,000 under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance, and then only in an amount which, when added to the amount of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance payable, does not exceed \$200,000."; and

(2) in subsection (e)—

(A) in the first sentence, by inserting "at any time" after "shall have the right"; and

(B) by striking out the third sentence and inserting in lieu thereof the following: "The Veterans' Group Life Insurance policy will terminate on the day before the date on which the individual policy becomes effective.".

SEC. 103. INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED MEMBERS CONCERNING AUTOMATIC MAXIMUM COVERAGE OF \$200,000 UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE.

Section 1967, as amended by section 101(b), is amended by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsection (d):

"(d) Whenever a member has the opportunity to make an election under subsection (a) not to be insured under this subchapter, or to be insured under this subchapter in an amount less than the maximum amount of \$200,000, and at such other times periodically thereafter as the Secretary concerned considers appropriate, the Secretary concerned shall furnish to the member general information concerning life insurance. Such information shall include—

"(1) the purpose and role of life insurance in financial planning;

"(2) the difference between term life insurance and whole life insurance;

"(3) the availability of commercial life insurance; and

"(4) the relationship between Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance and Veterans' Group Life Insurance.".

SEC. 104. RENAMING OF SERVICEMEN'S GROUP LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The program of insurance operated by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under subchapter III of chapter 19 of title 38, United States Code, is hereby redesignated as the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program.

(b) AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER 19.—(1) Sections 1967(a), (c), and (e), 1968(b), 1969(a)-(e), 1970(a), (f), and (g), 1971(b), 1973, 1974, and 1977(a), (d), (e), and (g) are amended by striking out "Servicemen's Group" each place it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "Servicemembers' Group".

(2)(A) The heading of subchapter III of chapter 19 is amended to read as follows:

"SUBCHAPTER III—SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE (FORMERLY SERVICEMEN'S GROUP LIFE INSURANCE)".

(B) The heading of section 1974 is amended to read as follows:

"§ 1974. Advisory Council on Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (formerly Servicemen's Group Life Insurance)".

(3) The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 19 is amended—

(A) by striking out the item relating to subchapter III and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"SUBCHAPTER III—SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE (FORMERLY SERVICEMEN'S GROUP LIFE INSURANCE)"; and

(B) by striking out the item relating to section 1974 and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

"1974. Advisory Council on Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (formerly Servicemen's Group Life Insurance)".

(c) OTHER CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—(1) Section 1315(f)(1)(F) is amended by striking out "servicemen's" the first place it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "servicemembers".

(2) Sections 3017(a) and 3224(1) are amended by striking out "Servicemen's" each place it appears and inserting in lieu thereof "Servicemembers".

SEC. 105. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance of any member of the Retired Reserve of a uniformed service in force on the date of the enactment of this Act shall be converted, effective 90 days after that date, to Veterans' Group Life Insurance.

TITLE II—OTHER MATTERS**SEC. 201. ELIGIBILITY OF CERTAIN MINORS FOR BURIAL IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES.**

(a) ELIGIBILITY.—Paragraph (5) of section 2402 is amended by adding at the end thereof the following: "For purposes of this paragraph, a 'minor child' is a child under 21 years of age, or under 23 years of age if pursuing a program of education at an educational institution, and those terms have the meaning as defined in sections 3452 (b) and (c) of this title."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 101(4)(A) is amended by striking out "chapter 19" and inserting in lieu thereof "chapters 19 and 24".

SEC. 202. PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND ACTIVITIES OF THE EDUCATION SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) LOCATED IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.—Chapter 77 is amended by inserting after section 7703 the following new section:

"§ 7705. Management, policy, and operations functions associated with the educational assistance programs of the Education Service

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"The offices of Education Procedures Systems, Education Operations, and Education

Policy and Program Administration, and any successor to any such office, of the Education Service of the Veterans Benefit Administration shall be in the District of Columbia."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7703 the following new item:

"7705. Management, policy, and operations functions associated with the educational assistance programs of the Education Service."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP] and the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. MONTGOMERY] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP].

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous matter on H.R. 3373.

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

There was no objection.

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

(Mr. STUMP asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3373, The Veterans' Benefits Amendments of 1996, makes a variety of changes in our veterans' life insurance programs.

It also clarifies eligibility standards for burial of minor children of veterans in national cemeteries. Additionally, the bill stipulates the location for the office that administers VA's educational assistance programs.

I believe this bill improves these veterans' programs and I urge my colleagues to support it. I want to thank my good friend, SONNY MONTGOMERY, the ranking minority member of the full committee, for his hard work and guidance on this measure.

Before yielding to him, I also want to thank TERRY EVERETT, chairman of the Compensation, Pension, Insurance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee, and LANE EVANS, the ranking minority member on the subcommittee.

Additionally, I would like to thank STEVE BUYER, chairman of the Education, Training, Employment and Housing Subcommittee, and BOB FILNER, the ranking minority member of the subcommittee, for all of their efforts on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Alabama [Mr. EVERETT].

Mr. EVERETT. Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, I want to recognize the distinguished leadership that our chairman, the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP], has given us, and the leadership of the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. MONTGOMERY]. I particularly want to recognize my ranking member on my subcommittee for his work on H.R. 1483.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3373 is a compilation of several bills reported by the Subcommittee on Compensation, Pension, Insurance and Memorial Affairs and the Subcommittee on Education, Training, Employment and Housing.

Title I makes several changes to life insurance programs operated by VA. First, it will merge the Retired Reserve Servicemen's Life Insurance Program with the Veterans Group Life Insurance Program and extend coverage to members of the Retired and Ready Reserves.

Second, it would make it easier to convert from active duty and veterans insurance programs to commercial policies by allowing those coming out of the service to go to either a veterans policy or a commercial policy. It would also allow a veteran to convert to a commercial policy at any time during the 5-year term of the VA policy. Among other things such as making it less costly to shift to whole life programs at a younger age, the bill would allow rapid use of commercial viaticle programs that buy policies at a discount from the terminally ill, thus providing much-needed cash for medical and living expenses for those who are often too sick to work.

The bill would also require the services to provide additional types of insurance information to those on active duty when they make insurance choices, and finally the bill would rename the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance Program as the Servicemember's Group Life Insurance Program.

Title II section 201 of the bill would make age limits for dependent's burial benefits in a national cemetery consistent with the rest of title 38. The bill would allow burial of dependent children up to age 23 if in school or 21 if not in school.

Title II section 202 of H.R. 3373 would prohibit VA from moving the Education Service headquarters functions out of the District of Columbia.

VA is proposing to move the entire service to St. Louis despite the subcommittee's expressed concerns about the dynamic nature of education programs. The committee feels strongly that VA policy and program management personnel need to work closely with the Congress, VSO's and DOD in the District to ensure that veterans get the absolute maximum out of their education benefits. The potential management benefits form locating the service at a field operation site is marginal at best and could possibly lead to further decreases in service to veterans.

But despite our attempts to persuade VA from making this highly questionable move, VA has not heeded our concerns. It is unfortunate that we need to legislate in this matter, but VA continues to move ahead with plans.

I want to emphasize that the bill does not prevent VA from downsizing the education staff or meeting any of

the goals of the Government Performance Review Act. The bill was introduced as H.R. 3036 by the ranking member, Mr. MONTGOMERY, and cosponsored by the chairman, Subcommittee Chairman BUYER and the former ranking member, Ms. WATERS, and has received strong support from the VSO's. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to thank the chairman of the committee and the distinguished members for bringing this bill to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, someone said to me the other day, they said, "You fellows on the Committee on Veterans Affairs, you are always complimenting each other back and forth across the aisles." I say, what is wrong with that?

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3373 will provide needed improvements in VA insurance programs and keep the administration of the GI bill and other educational programs here in Washington, where they belong. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to bring my colleagues up to date about the success of the newest GI bill.

The GI bill was started back in 1944. Our Government since then has provided educational benefits to veterans to assist in their readjustment to civilian life. Educational assistance earned through honorable military service is really good national policy. Those who serve in our Armed Forces deserve the opportunity to improve themselves by education. The Montgomery GI bill continues to be popular with the young men and women serving in the Nation's Armed Forces.

As of January 31, 1996, more than 2 million recruits have chosen to participate in the GI bill active duty, and the basic pay reduction required under that program, the \$1,200 the active duty person pays in, has brought \$2 billion into the Treasury. In March of this year, 94 percent of the new enlistees enrolled in the GI bill for active duty forces. I repeat, the bill does not come free, and active duty people have to participate in it.

Mr. Speaker, the Montgomery GI bill provided for the Selected Reserve has been extremely successful. This program has enabled the Reserves and National Guard to recruit and retain the smart, successful young people they need. Since the program was implemented for our reserves on July 1, 1985, nearly 600,000 veterans and over 364,000 members of the Selected Reserve have signed up for this program. Close to 1 million people are now going to school under the GI bill.

Without the strong support of my colleagues in this body, the chairman, the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. STUMP, who was a sponsor of this legislation when it was passed in 1984, as well as the gentleman from Illinois, LANE EVANS, a member on the committee, and those whose name I did not mention were not in the Congress back

in the early 1980's, but we are proud that this legislation has worked. I wanted my colleagues to know something about this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. EVANS], and thank him. He is the one that named the GI bill.

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Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, this bill makes changes in the insurance programs that are requested by the administration. The committee has examined these changes and finds they will enhance the usefulness of the insurance programs and put them on a firmer financial footing.

One provision of great importance to me is a measure ensuring that the Education Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to be housed in the District of Columbia at the VA central office. If this office were to be moved, it could jeopardize management and policy decisions affecting the Montgomery GI bill.

Mr. Speaker, I offered the amendment to name the GI bill after SONNY MONTGOMERY. I do not want to see it undermined, and that is why I very much appreciate again the leadership of Chairman STUMP and the gentleman from Alabama, TERRY EVERETT, on this matter today.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. NEY], a member of the committee.

(Mr. NEY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3373, the Veterans Benefits Amendments of 1996. The bill makes several changes which are needed, and some are administrative in nature, but I also wanted to point out one of substance.

Right now, veterans can be locked into a 5-year hold on a life insurance policy, and under this bill, this would allow an individual upon separation of the military, Mr. Speaker, to choose either to enroll in the Veterans' Group Life Insurance Program or to convert to a commercial policy. That is important, because a veteran might be ill and cannot wait that 5-year period to convert that policy, and might need the support that that financial situation can help them and their families with.

So I just want to point out that although there are a lot of technical changes that are good, there are changes of substance.

I also want to give credit to the gentleman from Mississippi [Mr. MONTGOMERY] who has always been willing to listen to a new freshman, and also the same holds true for our chairman. I would note, Mr. Speaker, that they have left politics at the door, which is the way it should be. I commend both gentlemen for that for the best benefit of veterans.

I rise to support this bill. It makes some changes and clarifications in the

definition of minor children for purposes of burial in our national cemeteries, and prevents the VA from moving their education service outside of Washington, DC.

I would also like to note, Mr. Speaker, that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs staff has logged many phone calls in support of this measure. It is a good bipartisan bill, and I applaud the entire committee and the chairman for their support of this.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN], chairman of the Committee on International Relations.

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the committee for taking up this important measure. I thank the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. EVERETT, for introducing the bill, as well as our distinguished chairman, Mr. STUMP, and the distinguished ranking member, Mr. MONTGOMERY, for their support.

This measure restructures the Servicemen's Retired Reserve and Group Life Insurance and Veterans' Group Life Insurance Programs by merging the two programs for members of the retired reserve and extending coverage under the Veterans' Group Life Insurance Program to members of the Ready Reserve of our uniformed services, a group that we should give special attention to. It also alters current law to make it easier to roll a military insurance policy over into a veteran's or commercial policy upon separation from the military.

These two programs, which are administered by the Prudential Insurance Co., supervised by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, provide low-cost group life insurance protection to active duty and recently discharged service members and, as such, they serve an important purpose of providing a measure of financial security and peace of mind to our Nation's service men and women.

Accordingly, I urge my fellow Members to give their support to this important legislation.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. STUMP. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WICKER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. STUMP] that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3373.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONGRATULATING TAIWAN ON
FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEMO-
CRATIC ELECTION

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 154) to congratulate the Republic of China on Taiwan on the occasion of its first Presidential democratic election, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 154

Whereas March 28, 1996, was the first time in the history of the Republic of China on Taiwan that a presidential election was held through direct popular vote by the people of Taiwan;

Whereas the election was held under great difficulties caused by extensive military threats from the People's Republic of China; and

Whereas the presidential inauguration will be held on May 20, 1996, and should be honored; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That—

(1) the Congress congratulates the people of Taiwan on holding their first direct and democratic presidential election;

(2) the United States continues its commitment to move nations toward freedom and democracy; and

(3) the United States is committed to encouraging and protecting its democratic friends on Taiwan, within the framework of the Taiwan Relations Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN].

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

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. FUNDERBURK, for his initiative in crafting House Concurrent Resolution 154 and also the gentleman from Nebraska, Subcommittee Chairman BEREUTER, and the gentleman from California, Mr. BERMAN, for swiftly adopting it subcommittee and passing it to the full committee.

The people of Taiwan and President Lee deserve our praise and support for holding Taiwan's first Presidential election.

They took great risk in sticking to their principles.

They proved to the State Department that it is possible to stand up to Beijing.

When the hostile Chinese military maneuvers were taking place and the administration was waffling on what the United States would or would not do if Taiwan were attacked, the people of Taiwan were brave and stood together.

It took an act of Congress to prompt the administration to send two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region.

The waffling continues.

On May 14, a Washington Post article pointed out that the Clinton adminis-

tration has not received any promises from Beijing regarding future sales of nuclear weapons technology. And yet the administration announced that it would not punish China for the ring magnet delivery.

And what of the sales of cruise missiles to Iran? The administration has still not done a thing.

We need more people like the Taiwanese around the world.

They set a great example for other aspiring democracies as well as for our own Nation.

We welcome them into the family of democratic nations and wish them the very best for their people.

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

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution. I will not bite at some of the partisan references that were made. Let me just stick to the issue here.

All Americans celebrate the remarkable political journey from autocracy to democracy that Taiwan has made in recent years. Taiwan's presidential election in march signalled that Taiwan has joined the ranks of full-figured democracy.

Taiwan stands as an inspiration and an example for other Asian peoples who do not yet fully enjoy the fruits of political freedom. The people of Taiwan deserve our commendation and our congratulations. So, too, does President Lee, whose inauguration yesterday promises a new day not only for Taiwanese democracy but also for improved relations between Taiwan and mainland China.

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

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. FUNDERBURK].

(Mr. FUNDERBURK asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FUNDERBURK. Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Republic of China on Taiwan, the Chinese people on Taiwan, and to their newly inaugurated president.

The Chinese on Taiwan have been evolving toward democracy and self rule for some time. The election of President Lee is the culmination of this process. It is also the beginning of the process of democratic government. President Lee Teng-hui has the distinct honor of being the first Chinese leader elected in a popular and direct Presidential election.

As always, we must applaud the movement of nations toward democracy and self-determination. President Lee's election and his inauguration is in accord with the very principle of democracy.

Yesterday, May 20, was the date of the inauguration of President Lee and I want to thank today my staff assistant, Dr. Sam K. Lee, who was born in

China. I thank him for his help with this and also for the cooperative support of the Democrats.

The reason and the purpose for this is to extend heartfelt congratulations from one of the oldest democratic republics to one of the youngest, and to extend a special welcome to the Chinese people on Taiwan to a unique fraternity among nations, the democracies. To this end, I submitted the House Concurrent Resolution 154, extending our congratulations to the Republic of China on Taiwan.

I think also the resolution is a strong signal that the United States stands with friendly democratic countries and will defend them in the face of bullying threats. So I wanted to applaud Taiwan's act of self-determination, and this bipartisan legislation draws a clear line of distinction between Taiwan, a free-market democracy, and mainland China.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SMITH].

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend, the distinguished chairman of the Committee on International Relations, for yielding me the time.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution is a welcome step toward focusing our China policy where it ought to be focused. For too many years the United States has ignored and insulted a faithful and freedom-loving ally in order to curry favor with a totalitarian dictatorship. This policy is not only morally problematic, but also self-defeating.

The recent Taiwan elections have shown that Chinese people, like people the world over, will choose democracy and freedom when they are given the opportunity. The election also highlights a difficult choice for the people of Taiwan: Whether their government should move gradually toward official independence, or continue to assert its historic status as the Government of the Republic of China.

The United States should take no position on this question. We should insist only that the choice be freely made by the people themselves, acting through legitimately elected institutions. We should also recognize that the only real hope for eventual reunification of Taiwan with the Chinese mainland rests in the possibility that freedom and democracy will also come to the mainland. Today, as the Beijing regime tightens its grip on power, this possibility seems remote. But the Taiwan elections should offer both an example and an incentive to Beijing. The message they send is clear: Join us in choosing freedom. We will never go back to slavery.

The people of Taiwan will never choose absorption by a Communist government. The model for reunification, if it is ever to happen, is not Hong Kong, where millions of people who had no say in the matter are about to be delivered forcibly into the hands of despotism. Rather, the model is Germany, where people who had thrown off

the shackles of communism quickly and freely chose unity with the free and prosperous society that had been built by their countrymen, who were happy to welcome and assist them.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to congratulate the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. FUNDERBURK] on his tireless promotion of democracy and human rights. As the former Ambassador to Romania, Mr. FUNDERBURK fought the good fight against the atrocities of Nicolae Ceausescu and incurred the wrath of our own State Department for his candor and consistency. I have enormous respect for Mr. FUNDERBURK.

Thus, it is not surprising to note that he is again in the forefront of this battle for democracy and freedom for the people of Taiwan. I want to thank my good friend from North Carolina, Mr. FUNDERBURK, for sponsoring this important resolution.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. SMITH] for his strong statement in support of this measure.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT], a member of our committee.

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 154, congratulating the people of Taiwan for holding the first free and fair democratic elections in Chinese history. And I want to congratulate my good friend from North Carolina, a fellow member of the freshman class, DAVID FUNDERBURK, for his work in bringing the bill to the floor. I also want to thank Chairman GILMAN for his leadership on this issue.

I work closely with the Taiwanese-American community in Cincinnati, and I can tell you what a glorious day it was for those great people on March 23 when, for the first time in 4,000 years of Chinese history, citizens went to the polls to elect a President. I not only want to congratulate those on Taiwan for this historic vote but those of Taiwanese heritage right here in the United States—like my own constituents, Dr. C.T. Lee and Dr. Mark Tsuang—who worked so long and hard to make such a dream a reality.

Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that we pass this resolution during the week of President Lee's inauguration as Taiwan's first democratically elected President. And I again thank Congressman FUNDERBURK and Chairman GILMAN for making the legislation possible.

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Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his strong supporting statement.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

Mr. Speaker, I do so to give some credit to President Clinton for his strong action in moving battleships into the Strait of Taiwan to ensure that the democratic election would take place without intimidation from mainland China. This is consistent with the very strong continuing support of the White House for this democratic election in Taiwan, which is also consistent with the strong support on the part of the Democrats in this Congress for democracy in Taiwan.

Mrs. COLLINS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Republic of China on Taiwan on the occasion of its first presidential democratic election. This truly is a historic occasion.

This occasion illustrates that self-will must start with the people. In President Teng-hui's inaugural address he speaks most eloquently: "Today, most deserving of a salute are the people of the Republic of China. A salute to them for being so resolute and decisive when it came to the future of the country, a salute to them for being so firm and determined when it comes to the defense of democracy."

I continue holding firm to the belief that democracy is the epitome of respect toward humanity. I believe democracy is the delicate balance between conflict and conviction. Having now chosen a democratic government, I welcome Taiwan into the international world of peace-seeking nations.

I now encourage the people of Taiwan to gravitate toward full economic growth, prosperity, and development, and support them as they rise to meet their new international challenges.

Democracy can offer hope. I hope that through democratic governance the people of Taiwan will seize the opportunity to appreciate their differences, and recognize their similarities. Through free will and determination, democracy can foster tolerance which is requisite in prevailing over turmoil. Further, democracy can foster patience in order to subdue hostilities.

Mr. President, people of Taiwan, on behalf of my constituents of the Seventh District of Chicago in the great State of Illinois, I congratulate you. I wish you well in your pursuit of self-governance.

Mr. KIM. Mr. Speaker, as a cosponsor of House Concurrent Resolution 154, I rise in strong support of this important resolution. This resolution is simple, yet profound in nature by congratulating the people of Taiwan for their courage in electing the first democratic government in Chinese history. For their efforts, I believe it is appropriate for this Congress to express its congratulations for their dedication to the principles of democracy. By electing the first democratic government in Chinese history on March 23, the people of Taiwan have taken a huge step forward.

The people of Taiwan have made tremendous progress over the past few years. The emergence of Taiwan as one of the strongest economies in Asia has propelled them into the spotlight as a model for achievement. As the Seventh largest trading partner of the United States, Taiwan has forced other Asian nations to open their doors and embrace the principles of free trade. Taiwan's peaceful transition from an authoritarian, single-party government to a democratic, multiparty, free-trading giant will serve as the beacon to other Pacific rim na-

tions seeking to following their footsteps. By passing this resolution Congress can send a strong message to people the world over that democracy is a recipe for success.

In that regard, Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues to support the immediate passage of this evenhanded and supportive resolution.

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Concurrent Resolution 154 to congratulate Taiwan on their recent Presidential election. I was privileged to attend the May 20, 1996, inauguration of Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui as part of the official United States delegation at the request of President Clinton.

It was very moving to watch the first inauguration of a freely elected President in a country which has never seen one before. Since 1949, Taiwan and mainland China have existed as two separate parts of the territory of China. Despite mainland China's military harassment prior to Taiwan's elections, the people of this land proudly cast votes in their first free election. Seeing the faces of people who have embraced democracy and capitalism for the first time, and set the pace for freedom, was poignant beyond imagination.

I have been actively involved with encouraging trade between the Republic of China [Taiwan] and the United States, specifically between Taiwan and south Texas, for a number of years. Therefore, I was enormously proud to have been selected by President Clinton to officially represent the United States at this inauguration of the first democratically elected president of Taiwan and to be part of history in the making.

I believe that the democratic elections in Taiwan represent one of the most dramatic events in Chinese political dynamics this century. As an American, and as a democrat, I am uplifted by the move toward democracy and capitalism by countries which have historically been ruled by an oligarchy. This is a positive change for both the people in Taiwan and the world at large.

As a democracy, it is incumbent upon us to lead by example, showing those countries still ruled by a select group that democracy and capitalism reward the individual and the country at the same time. Taiwan has come to that realization—and they are among the most enthusiastic capitalists on the Pacific rim. This election was an important and impressive step in the direction of democracy and prosperity for the Republic of China.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 154, a resolution congratulating the Republic of China on Taiwan on its first democratic election for president.

After a barrage of threats from Beijing and a series of intimidating war games and missile tests, Taiwanese voters elected President Lee Teng-hui as their first directly elected president in March. Since prior presidents were chosen by the legislature, this is truly an historical event and a significant step forward for democracy in Taiwan.

As an original cosponsor of House Concurrent Resolution 154, I believe it is important for this Congress to show our strong support for Taiwan's historic endeavor. What we do on this floor is watched closely in the PRC and Taiwan. Supporting this resolution sends a message of support for the democratic process in Taiwan, but does not veer from our one China policy. It is the right message to send to both Taipei and Beijing.

I also want to note that I am strongly encouraged by President Lee's appeal yesterday to convene a summit between the top leadership of Taiwan and the PRC. We only need recall the tensions between Taiwan and the PRC prior to the election of President Lee to understand the need for such a summit. A new dialog and communication between top leadership of the island and the mainland is essential not only for their relationship, but also for the maintenance of peace, stability and economic growth in the region.

I urge my colleagues to support House Concurrent Resolution 154 and the historic democratic process which Taiwan has undertaken.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong support of this measure, and want to thank Mr. FUNDERBURK for originally introducing it in the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee, and Chairman GILMAN for expediting the legislation to the floor for passage.

Mr. Speaker, the Chinese people on Taiwan have come a long way. Over a 10-year period of time, they have succeeded in instituting many of the democratic principles that we have enjoyed in this country for over 200 years. And they have done this through the hard work, perseverance and vision of one man: President Lee Teng-Hui. President Lee, who is the first native-born Taiwanese to govern Taiwan, has done remarkable things for his country and countrymen in this short span of time.

Therefore, on March 23, 1996, President Lee was the first man in Chinese history to be popularly elected president of Taiwan. That is no small feat, considering Taiwan's recent history, as well as other adversities he had to overcome—in particular, China's bellicose attitude toward Taiwan's impending election. However, those adversities were overcome, and President Lee was elected with a vote of 54 percent—validating his leadership and allowing him to continue forward with his progressive policies.

The American people have stood by Taiwan over the years, and I believe will continue to do so, as they continue to grow and mature into a full-fledged democracy. I have nothing but admiration and applause for President Lee and the people of Taiwan, and I recognize that the friendship between our two countries is a very special one, and should remain as such. I therefore tip my hat to President Lee on his election, and congratulate the Taiwanese people on achieving another great victory in the fight for freedom and democracy.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, since we have no objection.

In fact, we strongly support this resolution. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WICKER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, House Concurrent Resolution 154, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title of the concurrent resolution was amended so as to read: "Concurrent resolution to congratulate the Re-

public of China on Taiwan on the occasion of its first direct and democratic presidential election and the inauguration of its president."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on House Concurrent Resolution 154.

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

There was no objection.

CONGRATULATING SIERRA LEONE DEMOCRATIC MULTIPARTY ELECTIONS

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 160) congratulating the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone on the success of their recent democratic multiparty elections.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 160

Whereas since 1991 the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone have endured a horrific civil war that has killed thousands of individuals and displaced more than half the population of the country;

Whereas for the first time in almost 30 years, the Republic of Sierra Leone held its first truly democratic multiparty elections to elect a president and parliament and put an end to military rule;

Whereas the elections held on February 26, 1996, and the subsequent runoff election held on March 15, 1996, were deemed by international and domestic observers to be free and fair and legitimate expressions of the will of the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone;

Whereas success of the newly elected democratic government led by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah could have a positive effect on the West African Neighbors of the Republic of Sierra Leone; and

Whereas the historic event of democratic multiparty elections in the Republic of Sierra Leone should be honored: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

(1) congratulates the people of the Republic of Sierra Leone for holding their first democratic multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections in nearly 30 years;

(2) encourages all people of the Republic of Sierra Leone to continue to negotiate an end to the civil war and to work together after taking the critical first step of holding democratic elections in that country;

(3) reaffirms the commitment of the United States to help nations move toward freedom and democracy; and

(4) further reaffirms that the United States is committed to encouraging peace, democracy, and economic development on the African continent.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] and the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN] will each be recognized for 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN].

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

(Mr. GILMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, House Concurrent Resolution 160, introduced by our good colleague from New York, a member of our Committee on International Relations, Mr. HOUGHTON, congratulates the people of Sierra Leone on the success of their recent multiparty democratic elections. The people of Sierra Leone have endured 4 years of brutal civil war and have showed great courage earlier this year. Voters stood in line, often for many hours, to participate in the presidential election and the following runoff election. The newly elected government is now negotiating with rebels on the long-term peace agreement.

I do not think it is unreasonable to claim that Sierra Leone is an emerging success story in Africa. It is also a powerful rebuttal to those who believe that the entire developing world is sliding into chaos and humanitarian disaster.

Despite the failures of neighboring Liberia, the people of Sierra Leone have shown they have the courage and determination to bring order to their society. I commend the gentleman from New York [Mr. HOUGHTON] for introducing this resolution, and I urge support for the resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New York [Mr. HOUGHTON].

(Mr. HOUGHTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOUGHTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for this opportunity to talk on behalf of Sierra Leone. A lot of us have been concerned about Africa, a lot of us have looked for leadership there, and we really have found it in the magnificent result of the elections in Sierra Leone to which the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN] has referred. I would like to particularly thank, if I could, Bob Van Wicklin, in my office, who has been there, who has helped create the staff work, and has pointed up some of the necessities of our working strongly with that country.

Also I would like to thank, if I could, the 86 cosponsors, particularly the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. WATT], the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. CHABOT], the gentleman from New York [Mr. ACKERMAN], the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PAYNE], the gentleman from Florida [Mr. HASTINGS], the gentleman from New York [Mr. ENGEL], the gentleman from the Virgin Islands, [Mr. FRAZER], and so many others, and also, although I cannot mention the names, several Members of the Senate, ranking about 53 in number.