

Veterans' Compensation Rate Amendments of 2001.

I would first like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and their staffs, who worked to bring this bill before the House for final passage.

This legislation provides an important annual cost-of-living adjustment for disabled veterans, as well as surviving spouses of veteran's who receive dependency and indemnity compensation. Under H.R. 2540, the compensation rate is raised by 2.6 percent, the same percentage as the increase provided to Social Security recipients.

As the cost living continues to rise, it is important that the well-deserved benefits received by veterans and their families are not diminished as a result of inflationary costs.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this legislation and ensure that the benefits for the men and women who served our nation keep up with the ever-increasing cost of living.

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2001, specifically a provision in the legislation that ensures all veterans will be eligible for a government-furnished grave marker.

I would like to thank the Chairman for his hard work and commitment to our Nation's veterans and I appreciate the willingness of the Chairman and the committee to include my veterans marker provision in the conference report. I would also like to thank the Chairman for accommodating my request in the Joint Explanatory Statement to encourage the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to consider pre-existing requests for markers.

This legislation is essential to our veterans' futures, ensuring that their acts of heroism will be recognized beyond their lifetimes. This legislation remedies a glaring discrepancy in the law, ensuring that every veteran, regardless of whether their grave is privately marked, will be eligible for a government grave marker upon their death.

Every single veteran deserves to be permanently recognized for their contribution to our nation. Every veterans family deserves solace in knowing their loved one will continue to receive the recognition they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I extend the heartfelt thanks from the veterans in my district.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. OTTER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill, H.R. 2540.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROVIDING FOR APPOINTMENT OF PATRICIA Q. STONESIFER AS CITIZEN REGENT OF BOARD OF REGENTS OF SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass to the Sen-

ate joint resolution (S.J. Res. 26) providing for the appointment of Patricia Q. Stonesifer as a citizen regent of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution.

The Clerk read as follows:

S.J. RES. 26

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, in accordance with section 5581 of the Revised Statutes of the United States (20 U.S.C. 43), the vacancy on the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, in the class other than Members of Congress, occurring by reason of the expiration of the term of Dr. Homer Neal of Michigan on December 7, 2001, is filled by the appointment of Patricia Q. Stonesifer of Washington. The appointment is for a term of 6 years and shall take effect on December 8, 2001.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS).

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

Mr. Speaker, Senate Joint Resolution 26 provides for the appointment of Patricia Stonesifer to serve on the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents. This board governs the Smithsonian Institution and includes the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and the Vice President of the United States. It also is comprised of three Members each from the U.S. House and Senate and nine citizens who are nominated by the Board and approved jointly in a resolution of Congress.

Patricia Stonesifer currently serves as cochair and President of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She works to achieve that foundation's mission of improving access to advances in global health and education for all people as we move into the 21st century. Her other philanthropic work includes serving on the Board of the Vaccine Fund, which was started in 1999 to address the need for vaccines among the world's poorest countries.

Prior to her being appointed President and Cochair of the Gates Foundation, she held a Senior Vice President position at Microsoft and ran her own management and consulting firm.

I believe her diverse background and strong management experience make her an excellent candidate for appointment to the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents, and I urge my colleagues to support Senate Joint Resolution 26.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

At the risk of repeating some of the comments that the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) has stated, let me also join him to say I am delighted at this appointment.

Ms. Patricia Stonesifer has distinguished herself in a variety of fields.

She brings a combination of skills to the Smithsonian Institute. As has been previously alluded to her, in her capacity as Cochair and President of the Gates Foundation, she focused on improving global health throughout the world. She has also served on the Board of the Vaccine Fund, established in 1999, to address the dire need to combat preventable disease in the world's poorest countries.

As the gentleman mentioned, she brings considerable expertise in the private sector, which, combined with her philanthropic work, will make her a very welcome addition to this board.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Patricia Stonesifer will make a wonderful addition to the Smithsonian Institution's Board of Regents. Ms. Stonesifer has distinguished herself in numerous philanthropic, business, and public activities during her career, and I urge every Member to support her appointment.

Ms. Stonesifer now serves as the co-chair and president of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. At the Gates Foundation, she focuses on global health and education issues, reflecting her personal commitment to improving living conditions for peoples everywhere.

Ms. Stonesifer also serves on the boards of the Vaccine Fund, established 2 years ago to combat preventable disease in the world's poorest countries, and that of the African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnership, an organization working to fight the spread of AIDS in Botswana. She has served as a member of the American Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly's special session on AIDS.

In her business career, Ms. Stonesifer has both served as a senior vice president at Microsoft, and operated her own consulting firm, so she knows business large and small. She serves on the boards of two publicly held corporations, the King County (Wash.) YWCA, and the Seattle Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that Patricia Stonesifer will bring the right mix of philanthropic and business experience to the Smithsonian Institution. I urge the House to support her appointment.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. EHLERS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate joint resolution, S.J. Res. 26.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. EHLERS. 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 material on Senate Joint Resolution 26.

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