

those soldiers who were affected by those tests.

I would like to especially commend a Kansan from Topeka, Kansas, Jim Druckmiller, and the USS Power Association, as well as the Vietnam Veterans of America, their organization, for bringing this issue to the subcommittee and Congress. Citizens from my home State of Kansas and many other states were affected by these tests, and we must honor them and support them by seeking passage of this legislation.

I again commend the gentleman from New Jersey (Chairman SMITH) for giving this legislation the high priority it is due, and urge its passage by the House today.

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER).

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

Mr. Speaker, you would think that we would have learned from the experience in Vietnam and Agent Orange, which the gentleman from Illinois (Marine Corporal EVANS) taught us as he led the charge to uncover what happened with Agent Orange and to give our servicemen and women some protection later on.

If we learned anything, it is that our veterans must be informed of the risks of exposure that they experience on the battlefield. We did not learn that in Persian Gulf War I, and we are left with the Persian Gulf War illness. I do not think we have learned it with Persian Gulf War II, and who knows what we are going to have after this war.

Veterans must know about the agents to which they were exposed and whether these agents are likely to produce any health consequences, and they must be taken care of if they become ill due to the exposures during their service. That is what this bill does, based on this project that took place in the 1960s.

We have thanked a lot of people in the Congress for bringing this bill up, but I have to thank our veterans for their own diligence in bringing this matter to our attention. Once again, it was veterans who became ill who had to advocate on their own behalf to get their government, to get our government, to release information about harmful exposures so they could understand their own health issues and assert the legitimacy of their claims.

One of these veterans is Jack B. Anderson, a retired Navy man and a constituent of the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON), and that is what brought the gentleman from California (Mr. THOMPSON) into this, and we thank him for his leadership, and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) also for bringing this bill to us.

This project, Project 112, was a \$4 billion testing effort.

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It would translate into a \$40 billion effort today. That is a massive under-

taking. And there were tests at sea called Project SHAD to identify vulnerabilities to various types of attacks. Now, that is a legitimate function of our Defense Department, but they did not inform those who were tested that they were even participating in the test or that they have the right equipment to protect themselves or that their exposure might lead to later problems, this exposure to nerve gas and sarin.

Once again, it took veterans and it took Members of Congress to force the Department of Defense to admit that they were at fault and to make sure that the veterans received health care and proper compensation.

So I thank all those who took part in this to finally bring some justice to this case. This Project 112 and Project SHAD, the Vietnam situation with agent orange, the Persian Gulf War illness, all of these are part of a pattern. One would think that we would learn that by now. I do not think that we have learned yet, however, our lesson, and we are going to see it again after this war in Iraq.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I urge support for H.R. 2433.

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

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, before I yield back, I want to again thank all of my colleagues and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ), especially, for his leadership on this bill. The gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), who spoke earlier, held the really landmark hearings that helped catapult this issue into the forefront in people's thought.

Let us not forget what we are talking about. The Department of Defense in some 41 tests aboard ships used agents like anthrax, VX, sarin gas. Yes, they used simulants in many cases, but they actually used the real deal. They actually used real contaminants.

We are not sure, even to this day, whether or not the protective suits that were worn by our sailors aboard those ships actually protected them from these very caustic and poisonous agents.

We need to get to the bottom of it. I am convinced, having been at the hearings, having had several conversations with people at the DOD and the VA, that they are really going to go all out to make sure that every veteran who is malaffected or could have been malaffected by this gets the kind of health care and compensation that is necessary if, indeed, they have been contaminated by it.

So this is a very important bill. I hope that the full body will embrace it.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) that the House sus-

pend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2433, as amended.

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

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide veterans who participated in certain Department of Defense chemical and biological warfare testing with health care for their illness without requirement for proof of service-connection, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNUITY COMPUTATIONS ADJUSTMENTS FOR PERIODS OF DISABILITY

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 978) to amend chapter 84 of title 5, United States Code, to provide that certain Federal annuity computations are adjusted by 1 percentage point relating to periods of receiving disability payments, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 978

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

SECTION 1. ANNUITY COMPUTATION ADJUSTMENT FOR PERIODS OF DISABILITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8415 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating the second subsection (i) as subsection (k); and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

"(l) In the case of any annuity computation under this section that includes, in the aggregate, at least 2 months of credit under section 8411(d) for any period while receiving benefits under subchapter I of chapter 81, the percentage otherwise applicable under this section for that period so credited shall be increased by 1 percentage point."

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 8422(d)(2) of title 5, United States Code (as added by section 122(b)(2) of Public Law 107-135) is amended by striking "8415(i)" and inserting "8415(k)".

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to any annuity entitlement to which is based on a separation from service occurring on or after the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 978.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 978 is a great step towards reasonably assisting Federal employees.

This legislation temporarily doubles the usual Federal employees' retirement system direct benefit of 1 percent of an employee's pay during a period of disability. The added percentage point offsets the reductions in Social Security and the Thrift Savings Plan that would result from an employee's discontinuation of contributions while temporarily disabled.

The Department of Labor, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Office of Personnel Management support this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the inspiration of this bill is Mrs. Louise Kurtz, a U.S. Army civilian employee who works at the Pentagon. Mrs. Kurtz was tragically injured when terrorists crashed American Airlines Flight 77 into the west side of the Pentagon. Mrs. Kurtz was at work at the Pentagon that day, and she was so severely injured that she remains in rehabilitation today for the burns that affected more than 70 percent of her body. Current law prohibits Mrs. Kurtz from contributing to her retirement program while she recovers and receives workers compensation disability payments. This reality will significantly delay the point at which she will be able to retire. H.R. 978 will allow Federal employees who are injured or otherwise unable to work for extended periods of time to retire on schedule.

Mr. Speaker, the work of Federal employees has become even more critical in the 2 years since September 11. Each and every day, Federal employees protect our homeland, deliver our mail, teach our children, respond to emergencies, and perform countless other essential tasks. H.R. 978 is an opportunity for this House to effectively protect our hard-working Federal employees by addressing an inadequate component of the FERS system. Therefore, I urge all Members to support the passage of H.R. 978.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, introduced by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Chairwoman JO ANN DAVIS), will go a long way to help Federal employees injured on the job and receiving workers compensation. More specifically, this legislation will help Mrs. Louise Kurtz, a Federal employee from Virginia, who was severely injured in the September 11 attack on the Pentagon. She suffered burns over 70 percent of her body and lost all of her fingers. Mrs. Kurtz is going through rehabilitation and would like to return to work some day.

Current law, however, does not allow Mrs. Kurtz to contribute to her retirement program while she is

recuperating and receiving workers compensation disability payments. As a result, after returning to work and eventually retiring, she will find herself inadequately prepared and unable to afford to retire because of the lack of contributions during her recuperation. Federal employees like Mrs. Kurtz under the Federal Employees Retirement System who have sustained an on-the-job injury and are receiving disability compensation from the Department of Labor's office of Workers Compensation Programs are unable to make contributions or payments into Social Security or the Thrift Savings Plan. Therefore, their future retirement benefits from both sources are reduced.

This legislation offsets the reductions in Social Security and Thrift Savings Plan retirement benefits by increasing the Federal Employees Retirement System direct benefit calculation by 1 percentage point for extended periods of disability. The passage of this bill ensures that the pensions of hard-working Federal employees will be kept whole through their injury and recuperation period. I strongly support this bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I have no other speakers at this time. I urge all Members to support the passage of this measure, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. JO ANN DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 978.

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 RAFAEL PALMEIRO OF THE TEXAS RANGERS FOR HITTING 500 MAJOR LEAGUE HOME RUNS AND THANKING HIM FOR BEING A ROLE MODEL FOR THE CUBAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND FOR ALL AMERICANS

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 315) congratulating Rafael Palmeiro of the Texas Rangers for hitting 500 major league home runs and thanking him for being a role model for the Cuban American community, as well as for all Americans.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 315

Whereas Rafael Palmeiro hit the 500th home run of his career on May 11, 2003 at The Ballpark in Arlington, Texas, becoming only the 19th player in baseball history to accomplish such an achievement;

Whereas Rafael Palmeiro's achievement places him in the company of baseball's elite, including Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle, and Ted Williams;

Whereas Rafael Palmeiro's power swing has been consistent over his 17 years in the major league and this consummate quiet professional is still going strong;

Whereas, with eight consecutive seasons with at least 38 home runs, Rafael Palmeiro has established himself as one of the game's great power hitters;

Whereas, in addition, Rafael Palmeiro has mastered the intricacies of playing his position, first base, becoming a four-time All Star and earning three consecutive Gold Gloves from 1997 to 1999;

Whereas, through dedication and hardwork, Rafael Palmeiro has become one of the superstars of baseball and a future Hall of Famer;

Whereas Rafael Palmeiro is the personification of hard work and determination, and is an inspiration for Cuban Americans, having fled Havana, Cuba with his family in 1971;

Whereas Rafael Palmeiro has become a role model for people of all ages, taking time to work with foster children at the Lena Pope Home in Ft. Worth, Texas, including raising more than \$160,000 for supporting foster children and for encouraging foster parenting; and

Whereas, in addition to all of Rafael Palmeiro's other endeavors, he dedicates time to his wife Lynne and his two children, thirteen-year-old Patrick Ryne and eight-year-old Preston Connor: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives congratulates Rafael Palmeiro of the Texas Rangers for hitting 500 major league home runs and thanks him for being a role model for the Cuban American community, and all Americans, and for inspiring all Americans to persevere and work hard to achieve their dreams.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution currently under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 315, introduced by my distinguished colleague from the State of Texas (Mr. SESSIONS), congratulates Rafael Palmeiro of the Texas Rangers for becoming the 19th player in major league baseball history to hit 500 home runs and thanking him for being a role model for the Cuban American community and, indeed, for all Americans.

On May 11, the Texas Rangers beat the Cleveland Indians in a seemingly ordinary early season major league baseball contest. During the game, he