

The use of methamphetamine in the United States is increasing at an alarming rate. Methamphetamine abuse has attacked communities across America and has also affected our community on Guam. It is important that we continue our work to aggressively combat methamphetamine abuse and its terrible effects on American families and our children.

I strongly support S. 3525 because it aids our fight against methamphetamine abuse and because it also serves to protect our nation's greatest resource and one of most vulnerable communities, our children. I urge my colleagues' support for S. 3525.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 3525, as amended.

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

The title of the Senate bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to amend part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to reauthorize the safe and stable families program, and for other purposes."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RETURNED AMERICANS PROTECTION ACT OF 2006

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5865) to amend section 1113 of the Social Security Act to temporarily increase funding for the program of temporary assistance for United States citizens returned from foreign countries, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5865

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Returned Americans Protection Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. TEMPORARY INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM OF TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR UNITED STATES CITIZENS RETURNED FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

Section 1113(d) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1313(d)) is amended by striking "2003" and inserting "2006".

SEC. 3. REPORT BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL.

Not later than March 1, 2007, the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services, shall submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a written report describing how funds made available to carry out section 1113 of the Social Security Act have been used to provide assistance to United States citizens returned to the United States on or after July 20, 2006, and before the most recent date covered by the report, after evacuation from Lebanon, including a breakdown of program costs incurred with regard to repatriating individuals from Lebanon, including for (1) direct assistance to individuals

(such as costs of domestic travel and short-term lodging), and (2) administrative costs (such as for caseworkers, security, and related expenses).

SEC. 4. CONTINUATION OF REPATRIATION PROGRAM THROUGH FISCAL YEAR 2007.

Section 1113 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1313) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(f) The authorities provided by this section shall expire on September 30, 2007."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Returned Americans Protection Act, H.R. 5865. This legislation will help our Nation to continue to assist U.S. citizens fleeing the violence in Lebanon as they return home to the United States.

In recent days, thousands of Americans have fled the violence in Lebanon. Thousands already have landed in the United States, and thousands more will be arriving in the coming days. In all, as many as 15,000 U.S. citizens may be returning.

State workers are prepared to assist them, helping join them with family or friends, and even make arrangements for their connecting travel. If the arriving citizen has no other resources, provision will be made for a loan or, in exceptional circumstances, a grant to cover their continued travel expenses or temporary lodging costs, all of which costs money, including to reimburse States for caseworkers to offer this assistance.

In a program that is limited by a current \$1 million cap on annual spending, experiencing this large influx of needy, especially at this time in the fiscal year, is a challenge. As the Secretary of Health and Human Services said in a letter to Speaker HASTERT dated just yesterday, "We need your assistance in lifting this cap as soon as possible."

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us, H.R. 5865, provides that assistance. It temporarily lifts the program's current \$1 million funding cap, allowing for continued assistance for Americans returning from Lebanon. It also improves oversight over this little known program by making two additional steps.

First, it requires the HHS Inspector General to review program spending on those repatriated from Lebanon. The report will break down administrative

costs versus costs for travel and lodging. That way, Congress will have more information about what this program actually does.

The second thing this legislation does to improve oversight is to sunset the current repatriation program at the end of fiscal year 2007, more than 13 months from now. This will provide Congress sufficient time to review the program and decide where improvements are needed.

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This change also is estimated by the Congressional Budget Office as saving \$4 million, fully offsetting the cost of the additional assistance to those evacuating Lebanon. So we will cover short-term needs and get better data that we will use to improve this program for the long run. That is a win-win for everyone.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good bill which pays for additional services by improved oversight. We should approve it. I call on the U.S. Senate to do the same as soon as possible.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, one of the good things the Federal Government does is provide a lifeline to American citizens who suddenly find themselves in grave danger. That is exactly what has happened to 25,000 American citizens in Beirut who had signed in at the embassy when the Middle East crisis erupted.

There were plenty of pictures on the evening news of Americans desperately trying to flee the conflict. Many were able to escape on chartered flights. When they arrive back in the United States, a government employee will meet them at the airport and ask whether they need any assistance, including help in securing and paying for connecting flights, temporary lodging, food, or medical assistance.

Many don't need much help, but some do. And an important, but little known, program of the Social Security Act enables us to help Americans who escape the conflict with their lives and little else.

This is government at its best: helping our citizens in a time of crisis, responding quickly and effectively to meet the needs of our people. We are doing more than watching a crisis unfold on television. We are actually helping American citizens. And the Republicans, for some strange reason, want to kill this program. So much for the common good.

Now, this program has worked effectively for a mere \$1 million a year in funding. But the crisis in Lebanon has drained the fund, and the administration has requested a temporary increase to \$6 million.

That is all it will take to make sure that Americans have a lifeline to reach our own citizens. But the Republicans

intend to cut the lifeline. They will support an increase of \$6 million to help Americans trying to flee a war, but only if the House kills the program.

Americans remain trapped in the middle of a war zone, and the Republicans cannot bring themselves to help without extracting a pound of flesh from ordinary Americans. They want to kill a \$1 million program. This is with trillions of dollars in debt out there. And they claim they are cutting the trillion-dollar deficit. They want to cut a lifeline to ordinary American citizens, because rich people won't need the help and the rest of the American people don't matter.

We saw that same response in Hurricane Katrina, and we are seeing it here today. The philosophy of the Republicans that we should not prepare for a disaster is what made those awful pictures on television about Katrina; and they create the same thing here today, deliberately, when they are using the program, they are saying, it is like the house is on fire, yes, we should give some gas to the fire truck, but after the fire is over, sell the truck, we don't need it any more, we'll never need it again.

Anybody who knows about what is going on in the world can imagine that we may need this program again. Americans are fleeing a war-torn nation, and it is perfectly all right for the Republicans with the notion that they are on their own. They intend to terminate the program at the end of it.

They terminated their concerns for Americans a long time ago. They are telling us the only way to save the program this year is to kill it next year. Exactly what American value are they addressing by cutting a lifeline to Americans trying to flee a war? Democrats are outraged by this Republican hostility to our own people.

With my colleagues SANDY LEVIN and BEN CARDIN, I introduced legislation yesterday that would simply provide a temporary increase in the repatriation program cap so that we can continue to help Americans leave Lebanon.

Now, there is no reason I can think of why that shouldn't be done. But it is just too easy for our friends on the other side of the aisle. They want to pretend they are fighting government spending. This is a million dollars, folks. That is not a rounding error. That is not drippings. That is practically nothing compared to what they have done in tax cuts for the rich.

Of course that zeal applies to the \$5 million, but it doesn't apply to the \$18.4 billion they gave to Halliburton, \$5 billion of which nobody has any idea where it went. No oversight in this House on an issue like that. But on this, this \$1 million, we can't have that program.

And we know we are going to need it. Now, the next time the problem happens, the program won't be there. We will have to come into the House in emergency session and create this pro-

gram to help Americans get out of someplace that has become a war zone.

This sums up the values of the Republican leadership. Big bucks for the big donors and not even pennies for everyone else. We can do better than that in this House. I think the Senate will send us a better bill.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 5865, the Returned Americans Protection Act, provides emergency funding for the HHS repatriation program so it can assist U.S. citizens evacuating Lebanon after they return to the U.S.

That is exactly what HHS asked Congress to do in letters sent just yesterday to the Speaker and Senate majority leader. Instead of increasing the deficit, this legislation is fully paid for. It pays for this emergency assistance through increased program oversight, including by sunseting the program after 2007.

It is totally appropriate for Congress to set a sunset date to ensure future program oversight. The 1996 welfare reform law did the same thing. It replaced the former AFDC program with the new TANF block grant program and only authorized the new program through fiscal year 2002.

The Child and Family Services Program Act of 2006, which the House agreed to just this morning, in bipartisan fashion, also does the same thing. It limits the authorization of the child welfare services program through only 2011, or for the next 5 years, instead of permanently, as under current law.

This was done and agreed to in bipartisan fashion by this House to ensure Congress reviews this program as it reviews the related Promoting Safe and Stable Families program, which also would authorize it through 2011.

Mr. Speaker, again I urge Members to join me in passing this legislation today. H.R. 5865 will ensure that those arriving in America from the strife and turmoil in Lebanon will continue to have service available to help them as they make their way home.

It also ensures Congress time and opportunity to review the repatriation program and consider ways to improve it to even better meet the needs of displaced Americans in the future.

In closing, I would like to thank the dedicated staff at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, State workers supported by this program, and especially the many volunteers who have pitched in to help Americans returning home from Lebanon in recent days.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, it is sort of amusing to me that one minute Mr. HERGER and I can be working together, and the next minute we have little differences.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mr. Leavitt, sent a letter up yesterday asking for this increase in financing. Nowhere in his letter does he say we ought to terminate it. They have a funding mechanism by which they think they have the money.

I am very seldom with the President, but sometimes I am when he is right. In this case I think we ought to keep the program. I really think that it is unusual that the theory gets out on the floor here that in order to have oversight over a program you have to kill it.

You don't have to have the body. I mean, it isn't like an autopsy. Sometimes you can do oversight on a living program, a program that is actually going on. Now maybe we need to kill the Halliburton program and just kill the whole \$18 billion, then we can do oversight. But I think it would be much more reasonable to do oversight on a program that is going on.

I can't imagine how much abuse you could really have in a million dollars, in this sort of situation, given the kind of abuse that we have simply paid no attention to in the Halliburton situation.

So while I think that we can agree that we need some more money in this program, I don't think we want to just put ourselves in the situation of coming back one year from now and putting this program back in.

It may not be called the same thing. We will change the name. But the effectiveness of putting it in the law was that people anticipated that there would be situations like this before.

We have had situations in Rwanda, we have had situations in the Middle East, we have had situations in the Mediterranean, we have had all kinds of places where Americans get caught in a cross-fire and we have to extricate them, and we make available some money to take care of Americans.

That is why this is a good idea and shouldn't be ended simply as a way of saying we are controlling a national budget deficit of \$5 trillion, or whatever it is. This is \$1 million, guys. Come on.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, as sponsor of this bill, I support continuing to help the thousands of Americans fleeing the hostilities in Lebanon and returning to the safe confines of the United States.

As of Sunday, July 23, 20 flights had rescued 3,890 U.S. citizens from Beirut and the surrounding area. Of those rescued Americans, hundreds received aid from the Health and Human Services, HHS, repatriation program after they arrived in the U.S., including 25 unaccompanied minors and 21 special needs cases—of which 12 were medical cases.

However, under current law, there is a \$1 million spending cap on this program, which is close to being reached. Without legislative action, the repatriation program will no longer be able to provide aid to Americans in need. There may be 10,000 more U.S. citizens repatriating from Lebanon in the coming days who might require assistance through this program.

To make this aid available to other Americans as they arrive from Lebanon, this bill temporarily lifts the \$1 million annual spending cap on the current HHS repatriation program. The Congressional Budget Office predicts this will allow about \$4 million in additional spending for the thousands of Americans evacuating Lebanon.

Additionally, today's action, while increasing aid, also increases program integrity and oversight. The bill requires that the HHS Inspector General report to Congress on how the money in the program is being spent and it requires congressional action for the continuation of this program beyond fiscal year 2007. Therefore, even with the one-time increase in the spending cap, CBO estimates that this bill will be cost neutral over the next 5 years and will achieve savings over 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is good policy that ensures the continuation of aid for Americans in need, while providing the opportunity to improve upon this program. It is timely and because of the ongoing situation in the Middle East, it is important that we act quickly.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation today and am hopeful that the Senate will consider this bill in short order so we can send it to the President for his signature.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. HERGER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5865.

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.

21ST CENTURY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 2006

Mr. UPTON. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5852) to amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to enhance emergency communications at the Department of Homeland Security, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5852

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "21st Century Emergency Communications Act of 2006".

SEC. 2. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 101 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new title:

"TITLE XVIII—EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

"SEC. 1801. OFFICE OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—There is in the Department an Office of Emergency Communications.

"(b) ASSISTANT SECRETARY.—The head of the office shall be the Assistant Secretary for Emergency Communications.

"(c) RESPONSIBILITIES.—The Assistant Secretary for Emergency Communications shall—

"(1) assist the Secretary in developing and implementing the program described in section 7303(a)(1) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (6 U.S.C. 194(a)(1)), except as provided in section 314;

"(2) administer the Department's responsibilities and authorities relating to the SAFECOM Program, excluding elements related to research, development, testing, and evaluation and standards;

"(3) administer the Department's responsibilities and authorities relating to the Integrated Wireless Network program;

"(4) coordinate, as appropriate, regarding the administration of the National Communications System;

"(5) conduct extensive, nationwide outreach and foster the development of interoperable emergency communications capabilities by State, regional, local, and tribal governments and public safety agencies;

"(6) provide technical assistance to State, regional, local, and tribal officials with respect to use of interoperable emergency communications capabilities;

"(7) facilitate the creation of Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups under section 1805;

"(8) promote the development of best practices with respect to use of interoperable emergency communications capabilities for incident response and facilitate the sharing of information on such best practices (including from governments abroad) for achieving, maintaining, and enhancing interoperable emergency communications capabilities for such response;

"(9) coordinate the establishment of a national response capability with initial and ongoing planning, implementation, and training for the deployment of backup communications services in the event of a catastrophic loss of local and regional emergency communications services;

"(10) assist the President, the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget in ensuring the operability of the telecommunications functions and responsibilities of the Federal Government, excluding spectrum management;

"(11) establish, in coordination with the Director of the Office of Interoperability and Compatibility, requirements for total and nonproprietary interoperable emergency communications capabilities for all public safety radio and data communications systems and equipment purchased using homeland security assistance administered by the Department;

"(12) review, in consultation with the Assistant Secretary for Grants and Training, all interoperable emergency communications plans of Federal, State, local, and tribal governments, including Statewide and tactical interoperability plans, developed pursuant to homeland security assistance administered by the Department, but excluding spectrum allocation and management related to such plans.

"(d) PERFORMANCE OF PREVIOUSLY TRANSFERRED FUNCTIONS.—There is transferred to the Secretary the authority to administer, through the Assistant Secretary for Emergency Communications, the following:

"(1) The SAFECOM Program, excluding elements related to research, development, testing, and evaluation and standards.

"(2) The responsibilities of the Chief Information Officer related to the implementation of the Integrated Wireless Network.

"(3) The Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program.

"(e) COORDINATION.—The Assistant Secretary shall coordinate, as appropriate, with the Director of the Office for Interoperability and Compatibility with respect to the responsibilities described in section 314.

"(f) SUFFICIENCY OF RESOURCES PLAN.—

"(1) REPORT.—Not later than days 60 days after the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the resources and staff necessary to carry out the responsibilities under this subtitle.

"(2) COMPTROLLER GENERAL REVIEW.—The Comptroller General shall review the validity of the report submitted by the Secretary under paragraph (1). Not later than 30 days after the date on which such report is submitted, the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a report containing the findings of such review.

"SEC. 1802. NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS REPORT.

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the Assistant Secretary for Emergency Communications, shall, not later than one year after the completion of the baseline assessment under section 1803, and in cooperation with State, local, and tribal governments, Federal departments and agencies, emergency response providers, emergency support responders, and the private sector, develop a National Emergency Communications Report to provide recommendations regarding how the United States can accelerate the deployment of interoperable emergency communications nationwide.

"(b) CONTENTS.—The report shall—

"(1) include a national interoperable emergency communications inventory to be completed by the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission that—

"(A) identifies for each Federal department and agency—

"(i) the channels and frequencies used;

"(ii) the nomenclature used to refer to each channel or frequency used; and

"(iii) the types of communications system and equipment used;

"(B) identifies the interoperable emergency communications systems in use for public safety systems in the United States; and

"(C) provides a listing of public safety mutual aid channels in operation and their ability to connect to an interoperable communications system;

"(2) recommend, in consultation with the Federal Communications Commission and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, a process for expediting national voluntary consensus-based emergency communications equipment standards for the purchase and use by public safety agencies of interoperable emergency communications equipment and technologies;

"(3) identify the appropriate interoperable emergency communications capabilities necessary for Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to operate at all threat levels;

"(4) recommend both short-term and long-term solutions for deploying Federal, State, local, and tribal interoperable emergency communications systems nationwide, including through the provision of existing and emerging technologies that facilitate operability, interoperability, coordination, and integration among existing emergency communications systems;

"(5) identify how Federal Government departments and agencies that respond to acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and other emergencies can work effectively with State, local, and tribal governments, in all States, and with other entities;

"(6) include recommendations to identify and overcome obstacles to deploying interoperable emergency communications nationwide; and

"(7) recommend goals and timeframes for the deployment of an emergency, command-level communications system based on new and existing equipment across the United