

training since the end of the draft in 1973.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this resolution, supporting our national security, and supporting our troops and their families by giving them the pay increase they have earned.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I now yield 3 minutes to my friend and colleague, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KAGEN).

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, as a cosponsor of this resolution, I rise in strong support of its passage.

Next week, on Veterans Day, our Nation will pause to honor the many sacrifices made by veterans who have served in the defense of our country. And I appreciate the attention of our House leadership that they have given to this resolution and to our veterans who have served with incredible honor, with incredible skill and courage.

H. Con. Res. 162 recognizes the value of their dedicated service and begins to address the economic sacrifice of veterans as they endure their economic pain.

Because we rely on a voluntary citizen Army, we are now more indebted to those who have foregone higher pay elsewhere in civilian employment, especially as the value of our United States dollar continues to decline.

As Congressman MURPHY personally understands, our military has historically been underpaid. Service men and service women receive much less than they could earn in the private sector. And like my colleagues, I believe their pay must reflect their sacrifices.

This resolution calls upon Congress to fairly increase basic pay by 3.5 percent. We all understand that we must begin to pay all of our Nation's debts, and this resolution is a good first step in doing so.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, this is the last speaker on our side. And I now yield 3 minutes to my friend and colleague, a fellow Blue Dog, the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. JOE DONNELLY.

Mr. DONNELLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 162, which reemphasizes our support for giving a pay raise for our Armed Forces this year.

This administration insisted in its defense budget request that military servicemembers should get no more than a 3 percent increase. However, in May, the House passed a needed 3.5 percent across-the-board increase in pay for our brave men and women. Unfortunately, the administration has deemed this extra half point unnecessary.

I strongly disagree with this assessment. And I can tell you that our servicemembers who defend this country both at home and abroad don't find this increase unnecessary. For a young soldier who may be earning \$20,000 a year, that extra half percent totals \$100, but that \$100 could make all the

difference in the world when that soldier has bills to pay and a family to take care of.

I believe America's servicemembers deserve this extra half percent increase. They put their lives on the line for us daily, for which we can never fully repay them for their service, but a 3.5 percent salary increase is a good start; and it is a small token of this Nation's gratitude.

Passing this resolution sends a strong message that this increase is not only the necessary thing to do, but it's the right thing to do as well.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, again, I want to thank Congressman MURPHY.

The stress of war on our men and women and their families is enormous. We cannot do much to help with the stress of war, but Mr. MURPHY's resolution can help the military family as they try to balance their own budget. So thank you, Mr. MURPHY, for this legislation, this resolution.

And with that, Madam Speaker, I hope that each and every Member will vote in support of this resolution.

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

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Thank you to my colleague, Mr. WALTER JONES. I appreciate that. I appreciate the gentleman's service for the citizens of our country and the citizens in North Carolina.

We owe it to those protecting our Nation and fighting for our rights to make sure that we support them and their families who are waiting at home.

This pay raise may mean less than \$1,000 for some enlisted men and women, but for those with bills to pay and young children to feed, several hundred dollars is a big deal.

Madam Speaker, I strongly support this pay raise, and I urge my colleagues to do the same. By passing this bill, we tell our troops that we support them, and send a message to the President that this pay raise is not only necessary, it's our responsibility.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to echo the vital message of this resolution.

Earlier this year, the House of Representatives passed the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Authorization bill with overwhelming bipartisan support. Included in that bill is a 3.5 percent pay raise for the men and women who wear our country's uniform.

While we will never be able to fully repay the debt we owe to our troops and their families for their service and sacrifice on behalf of our Nation, this pay raise is the very least that we can do in recognition of their commitment to our country.

Today our servicemembers and our military families are answering their call to duty with dedication and honor, despite lengthy deployments and little time at home. I recently returned from visiting our troops in Iraq—including the Iowa National Guard 833rd Engineer Battalion based in my District. What I heard overwhelmingly from our servicemembers is

that they take pride in serving their country but are concerned about the hardship placed on their families at home. The 833rd was redeployed to Iraq after only 14 months at home. These citizen soldiers have paid a high price in their civilian and family lives in order to serve their country. The pay raise provided by the Defense Authorization bill is well deserved and a token of the appreciation of a grateful Nation.

Unfortunately the Administration has deemed the .5 percent added by Congress to its request for a 3 percent raise to be "unnecessary." I, and many others in this Congress, say it is necessary. I am a cosponsor of this resolution because I strongly believe we have a responsibility to provide for our servicemembers both on the battlefield and throughout their lives.

This resolution also highlights the importance of a provision in the Defense Authorization bill that provides the families of fallen soldiers with a \$40 per month special survivor indemnity allowance in relief of the "Military Families Tax." The Administration also opposes this provision. Its opposition is once again misplaced. This tax is unfairly placed on more than 60,000 survivors of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

I am proud that as a Freshman Member of the House Armed Services Committee, I helped shape a Defense Authorization bill that recognizes the dedication and honor of our troops. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and to send a strong message that the United States Congress recognizes the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform and is committed to providing lifelong support to our servicemembers and our military families.

Madam Speaker, at this time 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 Pennsylvania (Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 162, as amended.

The question was taken.

The Speaker pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HEROES EARNINGS ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF TAX ACT OF 2007

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3997) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide earnings assistance and tax relief to members of the uniformed services, volunteer firefighters, and Peace Corps volunteers, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3997

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE, ETC.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2007”.

(b) **REFERENCE.**—Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

(c) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title, etc.

TITLE I—BENEFITS FOR MILITARY AND VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

- Sec. 101. Election to include combat pay as earned income for purposes of earned income tax credit.
- Sec. 102. Modification of mortgage revenue bonds for veterans.
- Sec. 103. Survivor and disability payments with respect to qualified military service.
- Sec. 104. Treatment of differential military pay as wages.
- Sec. 105. Exclusion from income for benefits provided to volunteer firefighters and emergency medical responders.
- Sec. 106. Special period of limitation when uniformed services retired pay is reduced as a result of award of disability compensation.
- Sec. 107. Distributions from retirement plans to individuals called to active duty.
- Sec. 108. Disclosure of return information relating to veterans programs made permanent.
- Sec. 109. Contributions of military death gratuities to Roth IRAs and Education Savings Accounts.
- Sec. 110. Suspension of 5-year period during service with the Peace Corps.

TITLE II—IMPROVEMENTS IN SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

- Sec. 201. Treatment of uniformed service cash remuneration as earned income.
- Sec. 202. State annuities for certain veterans to be disregarded in determining supplemental security income benefits.
- Sec. 203. Exclusion of AmeriCorps benefits for purposes of determining supplemental security income eligibility and benefit amounts.
- Sec. 204. Effective date.

TITLE III—REVENUE PROVISIONS

- Sec. 301. Modification of penalty for failure to file partnership returns.
- Sec. 302. Penalty for failure to file S corporation returns.
- Sec. 303. Increase in information return penalties.
- Sec. 304. Increase in minimum penalty on failure to file a return of tax.

TITLE I—BENEFITS FOR MILITARY AND VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS**SEC. 101. ELECTION TO INCLUDE COMBAT PAY AS EARNED INCOME FOR PURPOSES OF EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Clause (vi) of section 32(c)(2)(B) (defining earned income) is amended to read as follows:

“(vi) a taxpayer may elect to treat amounts excluded from gross income by reason of section 112 as earned income.”.

(b) **SUNSET NOT APPLICABLE.**—Section 105 of the Working Families Tax Relief Act of

2004 (relating to application of EGTRRA sunset to this title) shall not apply to section 104(b) of this Act.

(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by this section shall apply to taxable years ending after December 31, 2007.

SEC. 102. MODIFICATION OF MORTGAGE REVENUE BONDS FOR VETERANS.

(a) **QUALIFIED MORTGAGE BONDS USED TO FINANCE RESIDENCES FOR VETERANS WITHOUT REGARD TO FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYER REQUIREMENT.**—Subparagraph (D) of section 143(d)(2) (relating to exceptions) is amended by striking “and before January 1, 2008”.

(b) **INCREASE IN BOND LIMITATION FOR ALASKA, OREGON, AND WISCONSIN.**—Clause (ii) of section 143(1)(3)(B) (relating to State veterans limit) is amended by striking “\$25,000,000” each place it appears and inserting “\$100,000,000”.

(c) **DEFINITION OF QUALIFIED VETERAN.**—Paragraph (4) of section 143(1) (defining qualified veteran) is amended to read as follows:

“(4) **QUALIFIED VETERAN.**—For purposes of this subsection, the term ‘qualified veteran’ means any veteran who—

“(A) served on active duty, and

“(B) applied for the financing before the date 25 years after the last date on which such veteran left active service.”.

(d) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply to bonds issued after December 31, 2007.

SEC. 103. SURVIVOR AND DISABILITY PAYMENTS WITH RESPECT TO QUALIFIED MILITARY SERVICE.

(a) **PLAN QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR DEATH BENEFITS UNDER USERRA-QUALIFIED ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE.**—Subsection (a) of section 401 (relating to requirements for qualification) is amended by inserting after paragraph (36) the following new paragraph:

“(37) **DEATH BENEFITS UNDER USERRA-QUALIFIED ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE.**—A trust shall not constitute a qualified trust unless the plan provides that, in the case of a participant who dies while performing qualified military service (as defined in section 414(u)), the survivors of the participant are entitled to any additional benefits (other than benefit accruals relating to the period of qualified military service) provided under the plan had the participant resumed and then terminated employment on account of death.”.

(b) **TREATMENT IN THE CASE OF DEATH OR DISABILITY RESULTING FROM ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE FOR BENEFIT ACCRUAL PURPOSES.**—Subsection (u) of section 414 (relating to special rules relating to veterans’ re-employment rights under USERRA) is amended by redesignating paragraphs (9) and (10) as paragraphs (10) and (11), respectively, and by inserting after paragraph (8) the following new paragraph:

“(9) **TREATMENT IN THE CASE OF DEATH OR DISABILITY RESULTING FROM ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—For benefit accrual purposes, an employer sponsoring a retirement plan may treat an individual who dies or becomes disabled (as defined under the terms of the plan) while performing qualified military service with respect to the employer maintaining the plan as if the individual has resumed employment in accordance with the individual’s reemployment rights under chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code, on the day preceding death or disability (as the case may be) and terminated employment on the actual date of death or disability. In the case of any such treatment, and subject to subparagraphs (B) and (C), any full or partial compliance by such plan with respect to the benefit accrual requirements of paragraph (8) with respect to such individual shall be treated for purposes of paragraph (1) as if

such compliance were required under such chapter 43.

“(B) **NONDISCRIMINATION REQUIREMENT.**—Subparagraph (A) shall apply only if all individuals performing qualified military service with respect to the employer maintaining the plan (as determined under subsections (b), (c), (m), and (o)) who die or become disabled as a result of performing qualified military service prior to reemployment by the employer are credited with service and benefits on reasonably equivalent terms.

“(C) **DETERMINATION OF BENEFITS.**—The amount of employee contributions and the amount of elective deferrals of an individual treated as reemployed under subparagraph (A) for purposes of applying paragraph (8)(C) shall be determined on the basis of the individual’s average actual employee contributions or elective deferrals for the lesser of—

“(i) the 12-month period of service with the employer immediately prior to qualified military service, or

“(ii) if service with the employer is less than such 12-month period, the actual length of continuous service with the employer.”.

(c) **CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—

(1) Section 404(a)(2) is amended by striking “and (31)” and inserting “(31), and (37)”.

(2) Section 403(b) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(14) **DEATH BENEFITS UNDER USERRA-QUALIFIED ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE.**—This subsection shall not apply to an annuity contract unless such contract meets the requirements of section 401(a)(37).”.

(3) Section 457(g) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(4) **DEATH BENEFITS UNDER USERRA-QUALIFIED ACTIVE MILITARY SERVICE.**—A plan described in paragraph (1) shall not be treated as an eligible deferred compensation plan unless such plan meets the requirements of section 401(a)(37).”.

(d) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to deaths and disabilities occurring on or after January 1, 2007.

(2) **PROVISIONS RELATING TO PLAN AMENDMENTS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—If this subparagraph applies to any plan or contract amendment, such plan or contract shall be treated as being operated in accordance with the terms of the plan during the period described in subparagraph (B)(iii).

(B) **AMENDMENTS TO WHICH SUBPARAGRAPH (A) APPLIES.**—

(i) **IN GENERAL.**—Subparagraph (A) shall apply to any amendment to any plan or annuity contract which is made—

(I) pursuant to the amendments made by subsection (a) or pursuant to any regulation issued by the Secretary of the Treasury under subsection (a), and

(II) on or before the last day of the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 2009.

In the case of a governmental plan (as defined in section 414(d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986), this clause shall be applied by substituting “2011” for “2009” in subclause (II).

(ii) **CONDITIONS.**—This paragraph shall not apply to any amendment unless—

(I) the plan or contract is operated as if such plan or contract amendment were in effect for the period described in clause (iii), and

(II) such plan or contract amendment applies retroactively for such period.

(iii) **PERIOD DESCRIBED.**—The period described in this clause is the period—

(I) beginning on the effective date specified by the plan, and

(II) ending on the date described in clause (i)(II) (or, if earlier, the date the plan or contract amendment is adopted).

SEC. 104. TREATMENT OF DIFFERENTIAL MILITARY PAY AS WAGES.

(a) INCOME TAX WITHHOLDING ON DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 3401 (relating to definitions) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(h) DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENTS TO ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of subsection (a), any differential wage payment shall be treated as a payment of wages by the employer to the employee.

“(2) DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENT.—For purposes of paragraph (1), the term ‘differential wage payment’ means any payment which—

“(A) is made by an employer to an individual with respect to any period during which the individual is performing service in the uniformed services (as defined in chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code) while on active duty for a period of more than 30 days, and

“(B) represents all or a portion of the wages the individual would have received from the employer if the individual were performing service for the employer.”

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this subsection shall apply to remuneration paid after December 31, 2007.

(b) TREATMENT OF DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENTS FOR RETIREMENT PLAN PURPOSES.—

(1) PENSION PLANS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Section 414(u) (relating to special rules relating to veterans’ reemployment rights under USERRA), as amended by section 103(b), is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(12) TREATMENT OF DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this paragraph, for purposes of applying this title to a retirement plan to which this subsection applies—

“(i) an individual receiving a differential wage payment shall be treated as an employee of the employer making the payment,

“(ii) the differential wage payment shall be treated as compensation, and

“(iii) the plan shall not be treated as failing to meet the requirements of any provision described in paragraph (1)(C) by reason of any contribution or benefit which is based on the differential wage payment.

“(B) SPECIAL RULE FOR DISTRIBUTIONS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (A)(i), for purposes of section 401(k)(2)(B)(i)(I), 403(b)(7)(A)(ii), 403(b)(11)(A), or 457(d)(1)(A)(ii), an individual shall be treated as having been severed from employment during any period the individual is performing service in the uniformed services described in section 3401(h)(2)(A).

“(ii) LIMITATION.—If an individual elects to receive a distribution by reason of clause (i), the plan shall provide that the individual may not make an elective deferral or employee contribution during the 6-month period beginning on the date of the distribution.

“(C) NONDISCRIMINATION REQUIREMENT.—Subparagraph (A)(iii) shall apply only if all employees of an employer (as determined under subsections (b), (c), (m), and (o)) performing service in the uniformed services described in section 3401(h)(2)(A) are entitled to receive differential wage payments on reasonably equivalent terms and, if eligible to participate in a retirement plan maintained by the employer, to make contributions based on the payments on reasonably equivalent terms. For purposes of applying this

subparagraph, the provisions of paragraphs (3), (4), and (5) of section 410(b) shall apply.

“(D) DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENT.—For purposes of this paragraph, the term ‘differential wage payment’ has the meaning given such term by section 3401(h)(2).”

(B) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—The heading for section 414(u) is amended by inserting “AND TO DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS ON ACTIVE DUTY” after “USERRA”.

(2) DIFFERENTIAL WAGE PAYMENTS TREATED AS COMPENSATION FOR INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT PLANS.—Section 219(f)(1) (defining compensation) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “The term compensation includes any differential wage payment (as defined in section 3401(h)(2)).”

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this subsection shall apply to years beginning after December 31, 2007.

(c) PROVISIONS RELATING TO PLAN AMENDMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If this subsection applies to any plan or annuity contract amendment, such plan or contract shall be treated as being operated in accordance with the terms of the plan or contract during the period described in paragraph (2)(B)(i).

(2) AMENDMENTS TO WHICH SECTION APPLIES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—This subsection shall apply to any amendment to any plan or annuity contract which is made—

(i) pursuant to any amendment made by subsection (b)(1), and

(ii) on or before the last day of the first plan year beginning on or after January 1, 2009.

In the case of a governmental plan (as defined in section 414(d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986), this subparagraph shall be applied by substituting “2011” for “2009” in clause (ii).

(B) CONDITIONS.—This subsection shall not apply to any plan or annuity contract amendment unless—

(i) during the period beginning on the date the amendment described in subparagraph (A)(i) takes effect and ending on the date described in subparagraph (A)(ii) (or, if earlier, the date the plan or contract amendment is adopted), the plan or contract is operated as if such plan or contract amendment were in effect, and

(ii) such plan or contract amendment applies retroactively for such period.

SEC. 105. EXCLUSION FROM INCOME FOR BENEFITS PROVIDED TO VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONDERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Part III of subchapter B of chapter 1 (relating to items specifically excluded from gross income) is amended by inserting after section 139A the following new section:

“SEC. 139B. BENEFITS PROVIDED TO VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONDERS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—In the case of any member of a qualified volunteer emergency response organization, gross income shall not include—

“(1) any qualified State and local tax benefit, and

“(2) any qualified payment.

“(b) DENIAL OF DOUBLE BENEFITS.—In the case of any member of a qualified volunteer emergency response organization—

“(1) the deduction under 164 shall be determined with regard to any qualified State and local tax benefit, and

“(2) expenses paid or incurred by the taxpayer in connection with the performance of services as such a member shall be taken into account under section 170 only to the extent such expenses exceed the amount of

any qualified payment excluded from gross income under subsection (a).

“(c) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section—

“(1) QUALIFIED STATE AND LOCAL TAX BENEFIT.—The term ‘qualified state and local tax benefit’ means any reduction or rebate of a tax described in paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of section 164(a) provided by a State or political division thereof on account of services performed as a member of a qualified volunteer emergency response organization.

“(2) QUALIFIED PAYMENT.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘qualified payment’ means any payment (whether reimbursement or otherwise) provided by a State or political division thereof on account of the performance of services as a member of a qualified volunteer emergency response organization.

“(B) APPLICABLE DOLLAR LIMITATION.—The amount determined under subparagraph (A) for any taxable year shall not exceed \$30 multiplied by the number of months during such year that the taxpayer performs such services.

“(3) QUALIFIED VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY RESPONSE ORGANIZATION.—The term ‘qualified volunteer emergency response organization’ means any volunteer organization—

“(A) which is organized and operated to provide firefighting or emergency medical services for persons in the State or political subdivision, as the case may be, and

“(B) which is required (by written agreement) by the State or political subdivision to furnish firefighting or emergency medical services in such State or political subdivision.”

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for such part is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 139A the following new item:

“Sec. 139B. Benefits provided to volunteer firefighters and emergency medical responders.”

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to taxable years beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 106. SPECIAL PERIOD OF LIMITATION WHEN UNIFORMED SERVICES RETIRED PAY IS REDUCED AS A RESULT OF AWARD OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (d) of section 6511 (relating to special rules applicable to income taxes) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(8) SPECIAL RULES WHEN UNIFORMED SERVICES RETIRED PAY IS REDUCED AS A RESULT OF AWARD OF DISABILITY COMPENSATION.—

“(A) PERIOD OF LIMITATION ON FILING CLAIM.—If the claim for credit or refund relates to an overpayment of tax imposed by subtitle A on account of—

“(i) the reduction of uniformed services retired pay computed under section 1406 or 1407 of title 10, United States Code, or

“(ii) the waiver of such pay under section 5305 of title 38 of such Code,

as a result of an award of compensation under title 38 of such Code pursuant to a determination by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the 3-year period of limitation prescribed in subsection (a) shall be extended, for purposes of permitting a credit or refund based upon the amount of such reduction or waiver, until the end of the 1-year period beginning on the date of such determination.

“(B) LIMITATION TO 5 TAXABLE YEARS.—Subparagraph (A) shall not apply with respect to any taxable year which began more than 5 years before the date of such determination.”

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply to claims

for credit or refund filed after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) **TRANSITION RULES.**—In the case of a determination described in paragraph (8) of section 6511(d) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (as added by this section) which is made by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs after December 31, 2000, and before the date of the enactment of this Act, such paragraph—

(1) shall not apply with respect to any taxable year which began before January 1, 2001, and

(2) shall be applied by substituting for “the date of such determination” in subparagraph (A) thereof.

SEC. 107. DISTRIBUTIONS FROM RETIREMENT PLANS TO INDIVIDUALS CALLED TO ACTIVE DUTY.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Clause (iv) of section 72(t)(2)(G) is amended by striking “, and before December 31, 2007”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by this section shall apply to individuals ordered or called to active duty on or after December 31, 2007.

SEC. 108. DISCLOSURE OF RETURN INFORMATION RELATING TO VETERANS PROGRAMS MADE PERMANENT.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subparagraph (D) of section 6103(1)(7) (relating to disclosure of return information to Federal, State, and local agencies administering certain programs under the Social Security Act, the Food Stamp Act of 1977, or title 38, United States Code or certain housing assistance programs) is amended by striking the last sentence.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply to requests made after September 30, 2008.

SEC. 109. CONTRIBUTIONS OF MILITARY DEATH GRATUITIES TO ROTH IRAS AND EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.

(a) **PROVISION IN EFFECT BEFORE PENSION PROTECTION ACT.**—Subsection (e) of section 408A (relating to qualified rollover contribution), as in effect before the amendments made by section 824 of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, is amended to read as follows:

“(e) **QUALIFIED ROLLOVER CONTRIBUTION.**—For purposes of this section—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The term ‘qualified rollover contribution’ means a rollover contribution to a Roth IRA from another such account, or from an individual retirement plan, but only if such rollover contribution meets the requirements of section 408(d)(3). Such term includes a rollover contribution described in section 402A(c)(3)(A). For purposes of section 408(d)(3)(B), there shall be disregarded any qualified rollover contribution from an individual retirement plan (other than a Roth IRA) to a Roth IRA.

“(2) **MILITARY DEATH GRATUITY.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The term ‘qualified rollover contribution’ includes a contribution to a Roth IRA maintained for the benefit of an individual made before the end of the 1-year period beginning on the date on which such individual receives an amount under section 1477 of title 10, United States Code, or section 1967 of title 38 of such Code, with respect to a person, to the extent that such contribution does not exceed—

“(i) the sum of the amounts received during such period by such individual under such sections with respect to such person, reduced by

“(ii) the amounts so received which were contributed to a Coverdell education savings account under section 530(d)(9).

“(B) **ANNUAL LIMIT ON NUMBER OF ROLLOVERS NOT TO APPLY.**—Section 408(d)(3)(B) shall not apply with respect to amounts treated as a rollover by subparagraph (A).

“(C) **APPLICATION OF SECTION 72.**—For purposes of applying section 72 in the case of a

distribution which is not a qualified distribution, the amount treated as a rollover by reason of subparagraph (A) shall be treated as investment in the contract.”.

(b) **PROVISION IN EFFECT AFTER PENSION PROTECTION ACT.**—Subsection (e) of section 408A, as in effect after the amendments made by section 824 of the Pension Protection Act of 2006, is amended to read as follows:

“(e) **QUALIFIED ROLLOVER CONTRIBUTION.**—For purposes of this section—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The term ‘qualified rollover contribution’ means a rollover contribution—

“(A) to a Roth IRA from another such account,

“(B) from an eligible retirement plan, but only if—

“(i) in the case of an individual retirement plan, such rollover contribution meets the requirements of section 408(d)(3), and

“(ii) in the case of any eligible retirement plan (as defined in section 402(c)(8)(B) other than clauses (i) and (ii) thereof), such rollover contribution meets the requirements of section 402(c), 403(b)(8), or 457(e)(16), as applicable.

For purposes of section 408(d)(3)(B), there shall be disregarded any qualified rollover contribution from an individual retirement plan (other than a Roth IRA) to a Roth IRA.

“(2) **MILITARY DEATH GRATUITY.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The term ‘qualified rollover contribution’ includes a contribution to a Roth IRA maintained for the benefit of an individual made before the end of the 1-year period beginning on the date on which such individual receives an amount under section 1477 of title 10, United States Code, or section 1967 of title 38 of such Code, with respect to a person, to the extent that such contribution does not exceed—

“(i) the sum of the amounts received during such period by such individual under such sections with respect to such person, reduced by

“(ii) the amounts so received which were contributed to a Coverdell education savings account under section 530(d)(9).

“(B) **ANNUAL LIMIT ON NUMBER OF ROLLOVERS NOT TO APPLY.**—Section 408(d)(3)(B) shall not apply with respect to amounts treated as a rollover by the subparagraph (A).

“(C) **APPLICATION OF SECTION 72.**—For purposes of applying section 72 in the case of a distribution which is not a qualified distribution, the amount treated as a rollover by reason of subparagraph (A) shall be treated as investment in the contract.”.

(c) **EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS.**—Subsection (d) of section 530 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(9) **MILITARY DEATH GRATUITY.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—For purposes of this section, the term ‘rollover contribution’ includes a contribution to a Coverdell education savings account made before the end of the 1-year period beginning on the date on which the contributor receives an amount under section 1477 of title 10, United States Code, or section 1967 of title 38 of such Code, with respect to a person, to the extent that such contribution does not exceed—

“(i) the sum of the amounts received during such period by such contributor under such sections with respect to such person, reduced by

“(ii) the amounts so received which were contributed to a Roth IRA under section 408A(e)(2) or to another Coverdell education savings account.

“(B) **ANNUAL LIMIT ON NUMBER OF ROLLOVERS NOT TO APPLY.**—The last sentence of paragraph (5) shall not apply with respect to amounts treated as a rollover by the subparagraph (A).

“(C) **APPLICATION OF SECTION 72.**—For purposes of applying section 72 in the case of a distribution which is includable in gross income under paragraph (1), the amount treated as a rollover by reason of subparagraph (A) shall be treated as investment in the contract.”.

(d) **EFFECTIVE DATES.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided by paragraphs (2) and (3), the amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to deaths from injuries occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) **APPLICATION OF AMENDMENTS TO DEATHS FROM INJURIES OCCURRING ON OR AFTER OCTOBER 7, 2001, AND BEFORE ENACTMENT.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply to any contribution made pursuant to section 408A(e)(2) or 530(d)(5) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended by this Act, with respect to amounts received under section 1477 of title 10, United States Code, or under section 1967 of title 38 of such Code, for deaths from injuries occurring on or after October 7, 2001, and before the date of the enactment of this Act if such contribution is made not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(3) **PENSION PROTECTION ACT CHANGES.**—Section 408A(e)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (as in effect after the amendments made by subsection (b)) shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2007.

SEC. 110. SUSPENSION OF 5-YEAR PERIOD DURING SERVICE WITH THE PEACE CORPS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subsection (d) of section 121 (relating to special rules) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

“(12) **PEACE CORPS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—At the election of an individual with respect to a property, the running of the 5-year period described in subsections (a) and (c)(1)(B) and paragraph (7) of this subsection with respect to such property shall be suspended during any period that such individual or such individual’s spouse is serving outside the United States—

“(i) on qualified official extended duty (as defined in paragraph (9)(C)) as an employee of the Peace Corps, or

“(ii) as an enrolled volunteer or volunteer leader under section 5 or 6 (as the case may be) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2504, 2505).

“(B) **APPLICABLE RULES.**—For purposes of subparagraph (A), rules similar to the rules of subparagraphs (B) and (D) shall apply.”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply to taxable years beginning after December 31, 2007.

TITLE II—IMPROVEMENTS IN SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

SEC. 201. TREATMENT OF UNIFORMED SERVICE CASH REMUNERATION AS EARNED INCOME.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 1612(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382a(a)(1)(A)) is amended by inserting “(and, in the case of cash remuneration paid for service as a member of a uniformed service (other than payments described in paragraph (2)(H) of this subsection or subsection (b)(20)), without regard to the limitations contained in section 209(d))” before the semicolon.

(b) **CERTAIN HOUSING PAYMENTS TREATED AS IN-KIND SUPPORT AND MAINTENANCE.**—Section 1612(a)(2) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1382a(a)(2)) is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of subparagraph (F);

(2) by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (G) and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following: “(H) payments to or on behalf of a member of a uniformed service for housing of the

member (and his or her dependents, if any) on a facility of a uniformed service, including payments provided under section 403 of title 37, United States Code, for housing that is acquired or constructed under subchapter IV of chapter 169 of title 10 of such Code, or any related provision of law, and any such payments shall be treated as support and maintenance in kind subject to subparagraph (A) of this paragraph.”.

SEC. 202. STATE ANNUITIES FOR CERTAIN VETERANS TO BE DISREGARDED IN DETERMINING SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME BENEFITS.

(a) **INCOME DISREGARD.**—Section 1612(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382a(b)) is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph (22);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (23) and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(24) any annuity paid by a State to the individual (or such spouse) on the basis of the individual’s being a veteran (as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code), and blind, disabled, or aged.”.

(b) **RESOURCE DISREGARD.**—Section 1613(a) of such Act (42 U.S.C. 1382b(a)) is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph (14);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (15) and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (15) the following:

“(16) for the month of receipt and every month thereafter, any annuity paid by a State to the individual (or such spouse) on the basis of the individual’s being a veteran (as defined in section 101 of title 38, United States Code), and blind, disabled, or aged.”.

SEC. 203. EXCLUSION OF AMERICORPS BENEFITS FOR PURPOSES OF DETERMINING SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME ELIGIBILITY AND BENEFIT AMOUNTS.

Section 1612(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1382a(b)), as amended by section 202(a) of this Act, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (23), by striking “and” at the end;

(2) in paragraph (24), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(25) any benefit (whether cash or in-kind) conferred upon (or paid on behalf of) a participant in an AmeriCorps position approved by the Corporation for National and Community Service under section 123 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12573).”.

SEC. 204. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by this title shall be effective with respect to benefits payable for months beginning after 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE III—REVENUE PROVISIONS

SEC. 301. MODIFICATION OF PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO FILE PARTNERSHIP RETURNS.

(a) **EXTENSION OF TIME LIMITATION.**—Subsection (a) of section 6698 (relating to general rule) is amended by striking “5 months” and inserting “12 months”.

(b) **INCREASE IN PENALTY AMOUNT.**—Paragraph (1) of section 6698(b) is amended by striking “\$50” and inserting “\$100”.

(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply to returns required to be filed after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 302. PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO FILE S CORPORATION RETURNS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Part I of subchapter B of chapter 68 (relating to assessable penalties) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“SEC. 6699. FAILURE TO FILE S CORPORATION RETURN.

“(a) **GENERAL RULE.**—In addition to the penalty imposed by section 7203 (relating to willful failure to file return, supply information, or pay tax), if any S corporation required to file a return under section 6037 for any taxable year—

“(1) fails to file such return at the time prescribed therefor (determined with regard to any extension of time for filing), or

“(2) files a return which fails to show the information required under section 6037,

such S corporation shall be liable for a penalty determined under subsection (b) for each month (or fraction thereof) during which such failure continues (but not to exceed 12 months), unless it is shown that such failure is due to reasonable cause.

“(b) **AMOUNT PER MONTH.**—For purposes of subsection (a), the amount determined under this subsection for any month is the product of—

“(1) \$100, multiplied by

“(2) the number of persons who were shareholders in the S corporation during any part of the taxable year.

“(c) **ASSESSMENT OF PENALTY.**—The penalty imposed by subsection (a) shall be assessed against the S corporation.

“(d) **DEFICIENCY PROCEDURES NOT TO APPLY.**—Subchapter B of chapter 63 (relating to deficiency procedures for income, estate, gift, and certain excise taxes) shall not apply in respect of the assessment or collection of any penalty imposed by subsection (a).”.

(b) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections for part I of subchapter B of chapter 68 is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

“Sec. 6699. Failure to file S corporation return.”.

(c) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply to returns required to be filed after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 303. INCREASE IN INFORMATION RETURN PENALTIES.

(a) **FAILURE TO FILE CORRECT INFORMATION RETURNS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subsections (a)(1), (b)(1)(A), and (b)(2)(A) of section 6721 are each amended by striking “\$50” and inserting “\$100”.

(2) **AGGREGATE ANNUAL LIMITATION.**—Subsections (a)(1), (d)(1)(A), and (e)(3)(A) of section 6721 are each amended by striking “\$250,000” and inserting “\$600,000”.

(b) **REDUCTION WHERE CORRECTION WITHIN 30 DAYS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subparagraph (A) of section 6721(b)(1) is amended by striking “\$15” and inserting “\$25”.

(2) **AGGREGATE ANNUAL LIMITATION.**—Subsections (b)(1)(B) and (d)(1)(B) of section 6721 are each amended by striking “\$75,000” and inserting “\$200,000”.

(c) **REDUCTION WHERE CORRECTION ON OR BEFORE AUGUST 1.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subparagraph (A) of section 6721(b)(2) is amended by striking “\$30” and inserting “\$60”.

(2) **AGGREGATE ANNUAL LIMITATION.**—Subsections (b)(2)(B) and (d)(1)(C) of section 6721 are each amended by striking “\$150,000” and inserting “\$400,000”.

(d) **AGGREGATE ANNUAL LIMITATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH GROSS RECEIPTS OF NOT MORE THAN \$5,000,000.**—Paragraph (1) of section 6721(d) is amended—

(1) by striking “\$100,000” in subparagraph (A) and inserting “\$250,000”,

(2) by striking “\$25,000” in subparagraph (B) and inserting “\$75,000”, and

(3) by striking “\$50,000” in subparagraph (C) and inserting “\$150,000”.

(e) **PENALTY IN CASE OF INTENTIONAL DISREGARD.**—Paragraph (2) of section 6721(e) is

amended by striking “\$100” and inserting “\$250”.

(f) **FAILURE TO FURNISH CORRECT PAYEE STATEMENTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Subsection (a) of section 6722 is amended by striking “\$50” and inserting “\$100”.

(2) **AGGREGATE ANNUAL LIMITATION.**—Subsections (a) and (c)(2)(A) of section 6722 are each amended by striking “\$100,000” and inserting “\$600,000”.

(3) **PENALTY IN CASE OF INTENTIONAL DISREGARD.**—Paragraph (1) of section 6722(c) is amended by striking “\$100” and inserting “\$250”.

(g) **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH OTHER INFORMATION REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**—Section 6723 is amended—

(1) by striking “\$50” and inserting “\$100”, and

(2) by striking “\$100,000” and inserting “\$600,000”.

(h) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to information returns required to be filed on or after January 1, 2008.

SEC. 304. INCREASE IN MINIMUM PENALTY ON FAILURE TO FILE A RETURN OF TAX.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subsection (a) of section 6651 is amended by striking “\$100” in the last sentence and inserting “\$225”.

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by this section shall apply to returns the due date for the filing of which (including extensions) is after December 31, 2007.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) each will control 20 minutes. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, Martin Luther King said, “Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love.”

Those that volunteer to serve our country deserve our thanks and our support. Members of our Armed Forces make tremendous sacrifices as they honorably perform their duties and deserve so much in return for their service.

The Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Act is an important piece of legislation that would eliminate many inequities that presently exist in Federal statutes affecting those performing service to our country.

The bill makes several improvements in the Tax Code for servicemembers and their families. It includes a provision to remove obstacles for Americans who wish to serve our Nation overseas through the Peace Corps by providing relief from capital gains taxes on the sale of a home.

Additionally, the bill makes several important changes to the Supplemental Security Income program, known as SSI. The SSI program provides critical benefits for servicemembers who are caring for a severely disabled spouse or child. This bill would change SSI’s treatment of certain forms of military compensation when determining SSI eligibility and benefit amounts for military families. As a result, more military families will be able to benefit from this important safety net. This bill would remove penalties that presently exist for blind,

disabled, and elderly veterans under the SSI program.

And, finally, the bill would end the disparate treatment of compensation that is paid to some AmeriCorps volunteers but not to others under the SSI program. This modest change would enable disabled Americans to serve their country and their community despite their disability. For some Americans, AmeriCorps can provide a pathway for the disabled to gain the skills to reenter the workforce.

At this time, I would like to enter into the RECORD the following documents.

STORIES OF AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES IN NATIONAL SERVICE

People with disabilities volunteer for the same reasons that anyone else does—to give back to their communities, to improve their surroundings, and to be active and engaged in life. Some national service participants who have disabilities volunteer with organizations that serve other people with disabilities, while others focus their efforts on helping to meet a wide range of critical community needs. The individuals profiled here represent a small sampling of the many people with disabilities involved in the Corporation for National and Community Service's Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs.

AMERICORPS*STATE AND NATIONAL

Steve Hoad, AmeriCorps Alumnus 2001, AmeriCorps*VISTA Alumnus 2003 Augusta, Maine; disability: blind.

Steve Hoad served with the Maine Conservation Corps in Augusta as a coordinator of volunteers on a statewide basis. The program, called SERVE—Maine (State Environmental Resource Volunteer Effort for Maine), identifies volunteers for outdoor or natural resource projects sponsored by government agencies or nonprofit groups. As a person who is blind, Steve thinks it's important for lots of organizations, including the Corporation for National and Community Service, to address inclusion. Steve feels his contributions are important for the additional reason that, in his opinion, “. . . people with disabilities have been left on the sidelines and pushed into isolation by a couple of different ideas that people seem to have. One is that because maybe someone looks different or acts differently or speaks differently, that they're not as smart; and the other is that because someone is disabled, they can't contribute anything, they need to be helped. Those two ideas become very exclusionary.”

AMERICORPS*VISTA

Dawn Facka, AmeriCorps*VISTA Alumna 2001, Anchorage, Alaska; current location: Charleston, South Carolina; disability: hearing impaired.

Dawn Facka, a service-learning coordinator with AmeriCorps*VISTA, advocates for people with disabilities and serves as a role model for young men and women with disabilities that come to serve in AmeriCorps Programs. In addition, she teaches others about the importance of inclusion and facilitates disability awareness and diversity training to AmeriCorps*NCCC members. She strives to create a work environment that is welcoming and understanding to those individuals with disabilities by advocating for community involvement and supporting organizations that support and help individuals with disabilities. She says that “If AmeriCorps, had not opened the doors of opportunity to me, I most likely would still be ashamed and em-

barrassed of who I am and [how] society has labeled me. I would still be apologizing to people who did not tolerate or accept my hearing loss. I can't begin to show my gratitude . . . to AmeriCorps for showing me another world.”

AMERICORPS*NCCC

Joe Tierney, AmeriCorps*NCCC Alumnus 2001 and 2002, Charleston, South Carolina; current location: Boston, Massachusetts; disability: traumatic brain injury.

Joe Tierney dedicated two years of his life to service with AmeriCorps*NCCC. During these years he tutored children, built houses, designed and built wheelchair ramps, surveyed and mapped a historical graveyard, blazed trails, worked at a camp for children and adults with disabilities, and much more. Of his time there he writes, “Throughout my service I met some amazing individuals, traveled to some fascinating locations, and learned a variety of skills, but most importantly my service gave me the opportunity to recover, the ability to experience life with a smile. I made the decision to join AmeriCorps because I felt an obligation to give back, I understood that I was very fortunate to have recovered and that I would have never done it without the help of many thoughtful, committed, competent individuals.”

LEARN AND SERVE AMERICA

Jared (not his real name), Learn and Serve America Alumnus 2002, Hampshire, Massachusetts; current location: Hampshire, Massachusetts; disability: significant disabilities.

Jared (not his real name), a high school student with significant disabilities, participated fully in a water quality testing initiative through a school-based service-learning project in Western Massachusetts. During the project, Jared spoke of all that he learned about water quality and the effects on the environment. His family and teachers were impressed with the project because it provided Jared with a meaningful experience to give back to his community as well as taught him vital life skills. His mother speaks of the project as being one of the few opportunities Jared has had to mingle with other students outside of special education.

RSVP

Dean Homerick, RSVP Volunteer, current location: Lexington, Ohio; disability: debilitating arthritis.

Dean Homerick began service as an RSVP volunteer as soon as he became eligible—the day he turned 55. He is involved in environmental issues and emergency operations. He volunteers regularly at the Columbus Zoo, participating in education programs to teach children about animals, as well as volunteering at a local nature center and at the Ohio Bird Sanctuary, where he edits a monthly newsletter. He also volunteers for the American Red Cross and is the volunteer coordinator for the Richland County Emergency Operations Center, charged with alerting volunteers in the event of an emergency.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Corporation for National and Community Service provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and country through three programs: Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America. This year, more than 1.6 million individuals will participate in the Corporation's programs, helping thousands of nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and government agencies build their capacity to meet critical local needs in education, the environment, public safety, disaster relief, and other areas. Together with the USA

Freedom Corps, the Corporation is working to build a culture of citizenship, service, and responsibility in America.

DELAWARE MAN HONORED WITH PRESIDENT'S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD AT NATIONAL DISABILITY INCLUSION AND NATIONAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

On December 9, Claude Allen, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, spoke at the National Disability Inclusion and National Service Conference. At the conclusion of his remarks, Allen honored outstanding volunteer Emmanuel Jenkins with the President's Volunteer Service Award.

Jenkins, who suffers from Cerebral Palsy, has volunteered for nearly ten years and recently graduated from his second term as an AmeriCorps member. His primary reason for participation in AmeriCorps was to help people. Emmanuel, now 21, started volunteering with children when he was only 11 years old. He ran a computer lab for the Boys and Girls Club as well as a program called Ticket to the Future, which taught students how to set and attain life goals. As a junior staff member, he assisted with a program called Family Day and tutored children in math. Emmanuel talks about the importance of encouraging students and always tells them, “You can do that because a winner never stops trying.”

Emmanuel currently lives in Dover, Delaware and volunteers with his local school district mentoring a local at-risk youth. His motivation stems from a public service announcement he saw on TV that said, “You can be part of the problem or part of the solution.” He strives to be part of the solution. Emmanuel is also a certified motivational speaker and his message is to challenge others with the quote, “When you give, you get!”

The President's Volunteer Service Award was created at the President's direction by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. The Award is available to youth ages 14 and under who have completed 50 or more hours of volunteer service; to individuals 15 and older who have completed 100 or more hours; and to families or groups who have completed 200 or more hours. For more information about the Award, please visit <http://www.presidentialserviceawards.gov>.

The 2005 National Conference on Disability Inclusion and National Service provided a forum for the national service and disability communities to come together and identify, develop, and share, new innovations that ensure a meaningful opportunity for all Americans to engage in volunteer service. The conference, sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service, brought together some 350 leaders from the disability and national service communities across the country to develop strategies for engaging more people with disabilities in volunteering and service.

I thank Mr. RANGEL for being a champion for those that unselfishly serve our Nation.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1130

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, we cannot express enough the tremendous debt of gratitude we owe the brave men and women who defend our freedoms every day. It is with great honor that I join my colleagues on the House floor today and

help lead the debate on H.R. 3997, the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act. This legislation is more than a simple cleanup of some of the disincentives, distortions and oversights that have disadvantaged our active duty military and veterans in the Tax Code.

This legislation is significant because it sends a clear message that even as many of our best and brightest are currently in harm's way in theaters where they are facing hostile fire, this Congress is prepared to work on a bipartisan basis to consider every option and every opportunity to improve the lives of their families and their predecessors.

The \$2.3 billion tax package which was reported out of the House Ways and Means Committee last week will bolster tax and Social Security benefits for military servicemembers, veterans and volunteers. This important measure will allow our active military men and women to benefit from the earned income tax credit by allowing them to pair their nontaxable combat pay with their earned income.

H.R. 3997 will ease the financial burden of losing a loved one by allowing survivors to put military death benefits into Roth IRAs without limitations. Furthermore, this legislation will ensure military Reservists will have the opportunity to make penalty-free withdrawals from their retirement plans, including 401(k) and IRA accounts. If deployed, these men and women will be able to provide the financial footing their families may depend on during their absence.

I am also pleased that the majority, in bringing this bill to the floor today, included in it an amendment I offered and withdrew in committee. I appreciate the bipartisan support displayed on this critical issue. Specifically, my provision will expand Social Security income benefits to our aged, disabled and blind veterans.

Under current law, the Social Security Administration counts annuities paid by State governments to veterans who are blind, disabled or aged as earned income. As a result, veterans in certain States like Pennsylvania, which provides paralyzed vets with an \$1,800-per-year annuity, may be denied Federal benefits or receive a lower amount than veterans in States that do not provide such annuities. H.R. 3997 will correct this inequity in the law and ensure that annuities awarded by States to vets with certain disabilities are disregarded when determining SSI benefits.

Madam Speaker, the dedication and bravery made by American soldiers have allowed us to exercise our everyday freedoms. Many have made the ultimate sacrifice, and it is our duty in Congress to make sure that veterans rights and interests are protected and served. As many of us prepare for this upcoming Veterans Day, this legislation reaches our Chamber at the proper time and includes the right incentives

to help our men and women in uniform. Overall, this legislation is a bundle of commonsense changes to help those who have contributed to the defense of our country and the protection of our freedoms. I am proud to be a supporter of this initiative, and I retain the balance of my time.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL).

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I am delighted that this bipartisan legislation to assist our veterans is before the House today. It also is certainly of great assistance to our active duty military and Reservists and indeed their families. The bill we are considering today is the product of a joint hearing held last month by the Select Revenue Measures Subcommittee led by myself and the Ranking Member ENGLISH and the Income Security Subcommittee led by Chairman MCDERMOTT and Ranking Member WELLER. We heard from a number of veterans advocates, military families groups, the Social Security Administration, Members of Congress and others who discussed their proposals to either enhance tax provisions or reduce burdens on those who serve or volunteer for America.

The bill we are considering today, which passed out of the full committee last week, is a product of those deliberations and will go far to assist those serving this country, again, emphasizing support for their families. This country is fortunate that so many soldiers and sailors have been willing to sacrifice for our defense. We must remember, once again, that this is a shared sacrifice. The families of someone serving this country can suffer financially, as well as emotionally, during extended tours. Congress has a responsibility to ensure that the Tax Code and other income security provisions do not create problems but, rather, solve them for military families. That is exactly what this bill will allow us to do.

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to allow Mr. NEAL to handle the rest of the time.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, at this point, I would like to yield 2 minutes to a leader on our committee, the distinguished gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER).

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, last month the members of the Ways and Means Committee heard compassionate testimony on several of the tax and benefit provisions for veterans, military families and volunteers in the bill we are considering on the floor today. Several provisions amend the Supplemental Security Income program that operates under the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, which I have the

privilege of serving as ranking member. These would effectively expand eligibility for and increase SSI benefit payments to certain military families, veterans and AmeriCorps participants. The bill also includes provisions offered by my friends and colleagues, PHIL ENGLISH of Pennsylvania and TOM REYNOLDS of New York, that would ensure comparable treatment under the SSI program when it comes to State annuities for blind and other disabled veterans.

It is important that we look for ways to ensure that those in the military and their families who make sacrifices receive appropriate and timely support. The bill before us today will provide more help to our veterans, to our military families and to others who volunteer in service to our Nation. That is something I support, and I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting our soldiers, our families and others who volunteer to help America by voting "yes" for this legislation.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas, a member of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. DOGGETT.

Mr. DOGGETT. Madam Speaker, support for our troops does not begin on the battlefield and it must not end there. With approval of this legislation, Texas veterans will be eligible for below-market home loans of up to \$325,000. Under the previous law, this benefit was restricted to veterans who had served prior to 1977. Today, we close the gap for the many who have been our heroes in the last 30 years who are not currently eligible. Those who have served to keep us safe in our homes deserve a chance of a home of their own. That is what this bill does.

We know that Veterans Day is approaching, but every day that we enjoy freedom bestowed by the sacrifices of those in uniform is a day that we should honor them. It is often said that we should honor our vets not only with our words but also with our deeds. Well, today we expand the opportunity for each vet to obtain a deed for their home. As veterans paid the price to build our great democracy, we can afford the price of building a foundation for their home ownership.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, it is now my privilege to yield 2 minutes to another member of our committee and a strong advocate of the cause of veterans, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BRADY).

Mr. BRADY of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this bill on the floor today that will provide additional tax relief to our Nation's veterans, especially those who are seeking to purchase a home. This bill updates current law to ensure that veterans who served after 1977 can qualify for low-interest home loans financed by the Qualified Veterans Mortgage Bonds.

Back home in Texas, this bill is going to enable Texas' Veterans Land Board to expand its existing low-interest loan

program to several thousand more Texas veterans, several thousand, helping a new generation of veterans own a piece of the American Dream. Our land commissioner, Jerry Patterson, a Marine veteran himself, does an excellent job supervising this program and reaching out to veterans. This bill is going to allow him, and our State, to help more veterans get into a home they can afford. My thought is for all the sacrifice our veterans make to defend our country, it is only right that we help them upon their return home.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from North Dakota and member of the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. POMEROY.

Mr. POMEROY. This is a photograph of Major Alan Johnson, his wife, Tori, and his daughter, Megan. This beautiful family suffered the tragedy of losing Major Johnson in Iraq. Last winter, we buried Major Johnson at Arlington Cemetery. His widow contacted me 2 weeks later to tell me that what had happened in the State of Washington is the pension plan there had simply given the money back that Alan Johnson had paid in as if he had terminated his employment at the time he was called to duty, called to deployment in his status as a Reserve officer.

It brought to light a gap in the law that protects our deployed Reservists and Guardsmen. When they come back, this law seamlessly reintegrates them into the pension plan of their employer, but there was no provision if we tragically lose our soldiers under deployment. Included in this bill is the HEROES Act, introduced by DOC HASTINGS and myself, that allows for survivor benefits to be paid in this situation. It is a very important addition. It is terribly important that survivors of our soldiers who paid the ultimate price have survivors benefits under the pension. This law will afford that.

Madam Speaker, I include for the RECORD a letter to this effect from Mrs. Tori Johnson.

NOVEMBER 5, 2007.

Hon. CHARLES RANGEL,
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means,
Longworth House Office Building, Wash-
ington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN RANGEL: I am writing to thank you for introducing the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax (HEART) Act, H.R. 3997. Your bill makes many important changes to the tax law that will be of great help to the men and women who serve in the Reserve and the National Guard and their families.

My husband, Major Alan R. Johnson, who was killed in Iraq earlier this year, was a public servant both in the Reserve and in his full time job. In his civilian life, he worked for fifteen years with the Yakima County Department of Corrections. We were a team. He was a strong leader and he depended on the strength of his family. We needed to be strong so he did not need to worry about us when he was serving his county in the Reserves.

Dealing with the problems and technicalities our family had to face after we learned that Alan was killed has not been easy. My husband was 44 and we were planning on his

retirement for our future. Because his employer considered Alan as an employee who had voluntarily terminated when he left for his deployment, the survivor benefit under his pension that we would be paid was less than the amount we would have received if he was still an active employee. When I asked why, I found out that in order to have his pension protected under existing law he had to return to work.

The HEART Act corrects the gap in the Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Right Act's pension protections for survivors of National Guard and Reserve soldiers who are killed in action and can not return to work. Our Guard and Reservists should know that the families that they leave behind will be able to rely on the survivor benefits that they have earned in their civilian employment.

Over 81,000 Reservist and National Guard members have responded to our Nation's call to duty. They believe in our country and are willing to make that ultimate sacrifice. When they cannot return to their former jobs your bill will make sure that their families will get the full survivor benefits that they earned from their jobs at home.

Again, I thank you for your leadership and that of Congressman Pomeroy and Congressman Hastings in making sure that the country that Reservists, like my husband, have sacrificed everything for will take care of their families. I hope that your bill, H.R. 3997, will become law soon.

Sincerely,

VICTORIA C. JOHNSON.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, may I inquire how much time is remaining on both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Pennsylvania has 14½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts has 13½ minutes remaining.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, at this point, it would be my honor to yield 4 minutes to a leader in our committee who made a seminal contribution to the SSI component of this legislation, the gentleman from New York (Mr. REYNOLDS).

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

Mr. REYNOLDS. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

I want to thank both Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member MCCREY, as well as Chairman NEAL and Chairman MCDERMOTT and Ranking Members ENGLISH and WELLER, for their outstanding leadership in crafting this legislation.

Madam Speaker, we come together today not as Democrats and Republicans but as Americans. We are united in our respect for those who wear the uniform of the United States armed services. We are united in our desire to ensure that Federal programs within the Ways and Means Committee's jurisdiction, from the Tax Code to the SSI program, work effectively for members of the military, veterans, first responders and their families. I strongly urge the passage of this legislation.

I would like to highlight two specific provisions in the bill that have been of particular interest to me during my time in Congress. The first provision,

section 202, is modeled on legislation, the Blind Veterans Fairness Act, that I first introduced in the year 2000. My legislation would correct a problem in the Federal SSI rules that affects blind veterans in four States, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, that provide these veterans modest annuities in recognition of the substantial sacrifice they have made in service to our country.

Regrettably, under current Federal law, these State annuities actually reduce any SSI payments for which blind veterans would otherwise be eligible. As we heard from Michelle LaRock of New York's Division of Veterans' Affairs at our Ways and Means Committee hearing 3 weeks ago, this quirk in the Federal SSI rules creates a hardship not only for the affected veterans themselves, but for the States that administer these annuity programs as well.

As in years past, the bill I have introduced in the 110th Congress, H.R. 649, has enjoyed bipartisan support. It has been strongly endorsed by the Blinded Veterans Association. I would also like to publicly thank Chairman RANGEL, not just the Chair of our committee but the dean of my State's congressional delegation, for his cosponsorship of prior versions of this bill, and I look forward to working closely with him to see the proposal finally enacted into law.

Let me turn briefly to a separate provision, section 107 of the bill, which will permanently allow penalty-free withdrawals from IRAs, 401(k)'s and other retirement funds for Reservists and National Guardsmen called to active duty. As we all know, when Guardsmen and Reservists are called up, they often face significant reductions in pay compared to their civilian salaries, putting an economic strain on their families.

To lessen this economic hardship, many of them chose to draw down on their retirement funds. Unfortunately, under prior law, they faced a 10 percent early withdrawal tax when they did so, and they faced restrictions on making repayments to their retirement funds upon returning from active duty.

□ 1145

Last year's Pension Protection Act provided relief from this penalty tax and permitted unlimited repayments within 2 years after leaving active duty, but only for Guardsmen or Reservists called to active duty before December 31, 2007.

To ensure that this important relief remains available on a permanent basis going forward, I introduced H.R. 867, the Guardsmen and Reservist Tax Fairness Act, on February 7 of this year. This legislation has also attracted a bipartisan group of cosponsors, as well as endorsements from several leading veteran service organizations. I look forward to seeing these commonsense changes enacted into law over the coming weeks.

I urge a "yes" vote.

BLINDED VETERANS ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, February 9, 2007.

Hon. THOMAS REYNOLDS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE REYNOLDS: On behalf of the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), the only congressionally chartered Veterans Service Organization exclusively dedicated to serving the needs of our Nation's blinded veterans and their families we commend you for the introduction of H.R. 649 "Blind Veterans Fairness Act." BVA is grateful to you for sponsoring this bill for those blind veterans who have their state annuities counted against the income levels by Social Security. Cornell University Disability Statistics research has found that the poverty rates for the disabled working age population in 2004, ages 21-64, has risen to 3.33 times the rate of poverty for the non-disabled population. They also found that the poverty rate for those with a sensory disability in this age group was 24.6% in 2005 as compared to 9.3% for the non-disability population.

These annuities from the states are clearly meant as a "gift" to help prevent these veterans from falling into these terrible statistics and in appreciation for their service to our nation. BVA appreciates that you not only understand this issue, but are willing to take action to correct the problems blinded veterans have had with these annuities from some states being provided to them. These should not be considered additional income by Social Security, but instead a special disability benefit for their service to our grateful nation. This penalty should be removed and the annuities excluded from all income for purposes of SSI for purposes of pension benefits.

BVA strongly supports H.R. 649, and we appreciate all your strong efforts in regards to this issue for blinded veterans.

Sincerely,

THOMAS ZAMPIERI,
Director, Government Relations.

MILITARY OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA,
Alexandria, VA, March 29, 2007.

Representative TOM REYNOLDS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE REYNOLDS: I am writing on behalf of the 362,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) to thank you for your leadership in sponsoring H.R. 867, the Guardsmen and Reservists' Tax Fairness Act of 2007.

Your bill would make permanent a provision in law for reservists to make penalty-free withdrawals from IRAs, 401ks and similar retirement funds while they are on active duty of at least 6 months. It would also permit them to make unlimited repayments to their retirement plans within two years after leaving active duty. The existing authority will sunset on December 31, 2007.

Under our nation's "operational reserve" policy, National Guard and Reserve forces are integrated in all military missions worldwide and are expected to serve on active duty tours one year out of every five or six years. This policy is expected to remain in place for the indefinite future. While Guard and Reserve retention remains strong, it is unrealistic to expect that families and employers can be expected to remain committed to reserve service for the long term without additional support from Congress. One simple way to help Guard and Reserve service men and women is to allow them to withdraw funds from their civilian retirement plans during an activation and to

repay those accounts on an unlimited basis following deactivation for up to two years. Making the existing authority permanent will help reserve families make ends meet, support their future financial security, and reduce the enormous stress and strain they endure in service to our nation.

MOAA strongly endorses H.R. 867 and we pledge our full support for its early enactment.

Thank you for your leadership!
Sincerely,

NORBERT R. RYAN, Jr.,
President.

ASSOCIATION OF THE
UNITED STATES ARMY,
Arlington, VA, February 12, 2007.

Hon. TOM REYNOLDS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. REYNOLDS: On behalf of the more than 100,000 members of the Association of the United States Army, I write to thank you for your leadership in sponsoring H.R. 867, the Guardsmen and Reservists' Tax Fairness Act of 2007. This bill would make permanent a provision in law for reservists to make penalty-free withdrawals from IRAs, 401-ks, and similar retirement funds while they are on active duty for at least 6 months. It would also permit them to make unlimited repayments to their retirement plans within two years after leaving active duty. The existing authority authorizing these provisions will end on 31 December 2007.

Under our nation's "operational reserve" policy, National Guard and Reserve forces are integrated in all military missions worldwide and are expected to serve on active duty tours one year out of every five or six years. This policy is expected to remain in place for the indefinite future. While Guard and Reserve retention remains strong, it is unrealistic to expect that families and employers will remain committed to reserve service for the long term without additional support from Congress.

Making the existing authority permanent will help Reserve Component families make ends meet, support their future financial security, and reduce the enormous stress and strain they endure serving our nation.

The Association of the United States Army strongly endorses H.R. 867, and we pledge our full support for its early enactment.

Sincerely,

GORDON R. SULLIVAN,
General, USA, Retired,
President.

NAVAL RESERVE ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, February 12, 2007.

Hon. THOMAS M. REYNOLDS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN REYNOLDS: I am writing on behalf of the membership of the Naval Reserve Association to thank you for your leadership in sponsoring H.R. 867, the Guardsmen and Reservists' Tax Fairness Act of 2007. Your bill would make permanent a provision in law for reservists to make penalty-free withdrawals from IRAs, 401ks and similar retirement funds while they are on active duty of at least 6 months. It would also permit them to make unlimited repayments to their retirement plans within two years after leaving active duty. The existing authority will sunset on December 31, 2007.

Under our nation's "operational reserve" policy, National Guard and Reserve forces are integrated in all military missions worldwide and are expected to serve on active duty tours one year out of every five or six years. This policy is expected to remain in place for the indefinite future. While Guard and Reserve retention remains strong,

it is unrealistic to assume that families and employers can be expected to remain committed to reserve service for the long term without additional support from Congress.

One simple way to help Guard and Reserve service men and women is to allow them to withdraw funds from their civilian retirement plans during an activation and to repay those accounts on an unlimited basis following deactivation for up to two years. Making the existing authority permanent will help reserve families make ends meet, support their future financial security, and reduce the enormous stress and strain they endure in service to our nation.

The Naval Reserve Association strongly endorses H.R. 867, and we pledge our full support for its early enactment.

Sincerely,

C. WILLIAMS COANE,
RADM, USNR (Ret),
Executive Director.

ENLISTED ASSOCIATION
OF THE NATIONAL GUARD,
Alexandria, VA, February 12, 2007.

Hon. TOM REYNOLDS,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) is the only military service association that represents the interests of every enlisted soldier and airmen in the Army and Air National Guard. With a constituency base of over 414,000 soldiers and airmen, their families, and a large retiree membership, EANGUS engages Capitol Hill on behalf of courageous Guard persons across this nation.

On behalf of EANGUS, and the soldiers and airmen it represents, I am writing on behalf of our membership to thank you for your leadership in sponsoring H.R. 867, the Guardsmen and Reservists' Tax Fairness Act of 2007. Your bill would make permanent a provision in law for reservists to make penalty-free withdrawals from IRA, 401k and similar retirement funds while they are on active duty of at least 6 months. It would also permit them to make unlimited repayments to their retirement plans within two years after leaving active duty. The existing authority will sunset on December 31, 2007.

Under our nation's "operational reserve" policy, National Guard and Reserve forces are integrated in all military missions worldwide and are expected to serve on active duty tours one year out of every five or six years. This policy is expected to remain in place for the indefinite future. While Guard and Reserve retention remains strong, it is unrealistic to expect that families and employers can be expected to remain committed to reserve service for the long term without additional support from Congress. One simple way to help Guard and Reserve service men and women is to allow them to withdraw funds from their civilian retirement plans during activation and to repay those accounts on an unlimited basis following deactivation for up to two years. Making the existing authority permanent will help reserve families make ends meet, support their future financial security, and reduce the enormous stress and strain they endure in service to our nation.

EANGUS strongly endorses H.R. 867 and we pledge our full support for its early enactment.

Working for America's Best!

MICHAEL P. CLINE,
Executive Director.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, at this time I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON), a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

(Mr. LARSON of Connecticut asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I want to extend as well and compliment Chairman RANGEL, Chairman McDERMOTT, and especially Chairman NEAL, for the timely manner in which they have handled very important legislation that addresses veterans, but specifically to Mr. NEAL because it wasn't lost on him in this piece of legislation that we also needed to address an important segment of our society, our volunteer firefighters.

It wasn't lost on Mr. NEAL that volunteer firefighters protect approximately 38 percent of America's population and more than 70 percent of our land. It wasn't lost on Mr. NEAL that volunteer firefighters save taxpayers nearly \$37 billion annually with their efforts.

Two-thirds of the 1.2 million firefighters in this country are in fact volunteers. More importantly, it wasn't lost on anyone in this body that it wasn't the FBI, the CIA or the Department of Defense, it was our front line defenders, first responders that were there at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon and in the fields of Pennsylvania. It's to them, of course, that we owe this debt of gratitude.

It was lost, however, on the IRS that when States like mine in Connecticut moved to provide a rebate on their local property taxes, that they sought to tax it and make it ordinary income on behalf of these brave volunteers. This legislation corrects that. I want to commend the Mitchell brothers, both John and Billy, from South Windsor, Connecticut, John McAuliffe of Whethersfield, and Chief Phil Crombie, who are the genesis of this idea and concept and brought it to my attention.

Madam Speaker, I again thank Chairman NEAL for making it all happen.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, it is now my privilege to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES), a strong advocate of the cause of veterans.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, first, I would like to thank Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member McCRERY for including H.R. 418 into the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2007. For several years I have tried to get this measure to the House floor. So thank you, Mr. NEAL, Mr. McDERMOTT, and Mr. ENGLISH.

H.R. 418 is a bill that would permit military families who receive the death gratuity to invest the full amount into certain tax-favored accounts. As you may know, a death gratuity is a \$100,000 payment paid to survivors of servicemembers whose death resulted from combat-related circumstances. Current tax law limits the amount that recipients of the death gratuity can place in tax-preferred accounts, such as a Roth IRA or a Coverdell Educational

Savings Account. This legislation would change that to allow recipients to contribute up to the full amount of the gratuity payment to any of those two accounts.

As the families of our fallen heroes try to put their lives back together, they need help. The death of a loved one is difficult enough, without having to worry about saving the death gratuity to pay for retirement, college or other expenses and then have the government come in and tax the interest on that savings.

Madam Speaker, the need for this assistance was brought to my attention by Captain Michael Ceres, a constituent stationed at Marine Corps Air Station New River. Captain Ceres, who just returned from serving in Iraq and will soon be redeployed, contacted my office and suggested that Congress institute this change to ease the burden on grieving military families. We owe it to our fallen military heroes to expand the options to the families who receive the death gratuity, families who have paid the ultimate cost with the loss of their loved one.

Today, I call on all my colleagues in the House to support this major piece of legislation, known as the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act of 2007. With that, I want to thank the leadership on the Democratic side, the leadership on the Republican side for this comprehensive bill to help our military and their families.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER), a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in recognizing me and in working with us.

For over 60 years, Oregonians have provided a benefit to our returning veterans of home loans that were below market rate to be able to help them re-establish themselves in the community and as a small gesture of our appreciation for their sacrifice. Unfortunately, with the recent flood of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, we found that that program has been stretched to the limit and we were faced with denying them access.

Working with Mr. NEAL, Chairman RANGEL, the committee and subcommittee, we were able to make an important adjustment, a 400 percent increase in the loan cap, so that we will be able to fully meet the needs of returning Oregon veterans, and along the way it will help people in Alaska, Wisconsin, Texas, and California. In this time of uncertainty in the housing market, giving these important loans to our veterans is an important gesture. I appreciate the work that the committee has done to make this a reality.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, it is now my privilege to yield 4 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), a

true advocate of the veterans, as well as all of the military facilities in his district.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for recognizing me.

This, as you can hear, is an important piece of legislation that is widely supported and praised here on the House floor today, but I am disappointed that the majority in the committee rejected an amendment that the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) offered.

This amendment was a common-sense, bipartisan fix to the Tax Code to prevent lower-income military personnel and their families from being discriminated against when applying to live in affordable housing built under the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.

A number of military installations across the country are experiencing housing shortages as a result of the 2005 BRAC. One of those facilities, Fort Riley, an Army post located in the State of Kansas, is nearly doubling in size and is now seeing an influx of 30,000 soldiers, civilian workers, and others.

When the new soldiers live off base, they receive a military housing allowance from the government that they use for payment of rent. Though the Tax Code does not treat the housing allowance as taxable income, it is considered income when determining a military family's eligibility to live in facilities financed with low-income housing tax credits. The result is that some servicemembers, particularly our enlisted men and women, are considered to earn too much income and are thus disqualified from living in affordable housing.

However, comparatively low-income civilians receiving section 8 housing vouchers from the Federal Government are more likely to qualify for this housing. This is because, unlike the military housing subsidy, the Tax Code exempts section 8 assistance from being considered income.

Our Nation's military families deserve access to safe, decent, and affordable housing; and they should be given a fair opportunity to qualify for it. The House acted in May to exempt military housing allowance from income eligibility requirements when qualifying for the Head Start program. The USDA's WIC nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children also provides for this exemption. Unfortunately, the discrimination persists when military families apply to live in affordable housing and enlisted servicemembers and their families continue to be treated unfairly in communities across the country.

I had hoped to offer amendment here today on the House floor to address this issue, but the procedure by which this bill is brought to the floor does not allow me that opportunity. I would urge and encourage my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring H.R. 1481, The

Military Access to Housing Act, to correct this inequality, and to encourage the leadership of this House to bring this measure to the floor for a vote.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PASCRELL), also a member of the Ways and Means Committee.

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

Mr. PASCRELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3997, and I want to commend Chairman RANGEL, Congressman NEAL, and Congressman ENGLISH for their persistence.

Tax changes, if done wrong, can exacerbate existing inequalities, hurt our moral fabric, and slow the economy; so I am glad today with this bill we will take up a tax measure that is not geared towards increasing the fortunes of the already fortunate, but instead we will provide a measure of relief for those brave men and women serving in the military and as first responders.

In particular, I am glad to see that this bill excludes from income certain reimbursable expenses incurred in the line of duty by volunteer firefighters; and I commend my friend, Congressman LARSON from Connecticut, who has worked on this issue for some time.

I am truly heartened we are permanently extending combat pay in the calculations of the earned income tax credit. Recent law allowed members of the Armed Forces to exclude combat pay, which is generally nontaxable, for purposes of computing the earned income credit. But this will only last through the 2006 tax year. Many of us have worked for some time to make this proposal permanent. I am tremendously pleased that this provision has made it into the broader package that we are discussing today. There is no reason a member of the Armed Forces should lose their earned income tax credit when they are mobilized serving their country.

Again, I thank the chairman and I thank Mr. NEAL and Mr. ENGLISH for their work and diligence on this critical issue.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY), a distinguished member of the Ways and Means Committee.

Ms. BERKLEY. Madam Speaker, as Veterans Day approaches, the timing could not be more appropriate for Congress to be considering the HEART Act. This legislation will help veterans and their families, and it will also show them that their fellow citizens appreciate their service and honor their sacrifices for our country.

Nevada has one of the fastest growing veterans populations in the country, and I have seen firsthand the economic hardship that extended military

deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused. The HEART Act will allow more families to qualify for the earned income tax credit or to make penalty-free withdrawals from retirement plans in time of true economic need to help ease the burden of deployment.

Nevada has suffered 59 deaths during the global war on terror, including 46 in Iraq. I support the provisions of this bill that will allow the spouses of those who sacrificed their lives to be better able to plan for their futures and those of their children.

As a member of both the Ways and Means Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I strongly support this bill. I urge my colleagues to vote for this bipartisan legislation.

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Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I yield Mr. ALTMIRE from Pennsylvania, a good friend of the veteran, 1 minute.

Mr. ALTMIRE. I thank the chairman for including in this bill legislation I introduced to assist our brave men and women in uniform.

My bill, H.R. 3827, the Active Duty Military Tax Relief Act, ensures that active duty military personnel will be able to treat combat pay as earned income when computing the earned income tax credit.

My bill also allows Reservists called to active duty to make penalty-free withdrawals from their retirement plans. And servicemembers who receive differential pay from their civilian employer will be able to contribute those wages to their retirement plan.

Finally, family members of those killed in the line of duty will be able to contribute up to \$100,000 of the military death gratuity into tax-favored accounts, such as Roth IRAs and education savings accounts.

I thank the chairman for working with me to ensure that all of these provisions from my bill have been included in full in this legislation which I strongly support.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I recognize a great friend of the veteran, the gentlewoman from Kansas (Mrs. BOYDA) for 1 minute.

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Madam Speaker, unless we act now, over 150,000 of our American troops and their families will pay sharply higher taxes. Unless Congress extends the military eligibility for the earned income tax credit, we will, through inaction, slash the EITC for hundreds of thousands of troops. It would be a tax borne solely by our soldiers and our military families. We call it a soldier tax.

Our military continues to serve our country with honor and distinction. The last thing we need is for our soldiers and their families to have to worry about paying higher taxes next year. That is why I authored the Tax Relief for Armed Combat Families Act for 2007. It will permanently end the

soldier tax. Our military families should not have to worry from year to year what funds are going to be available to take care of their families.

I thank Chairman RANGEL and Chairman NEAL for working my language into today's legislation, and I call on my colleagues to pass this important legislation. Let's permanently end the soldier tax.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from Arizona (Ms. GIFFORDS), a friend of the veteran.

Ms. GIFFORDS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of tax cuts for true American heroes: our combat troops, our veterans, and our firefighters.

Last month I introduced H.R. 3808, the Combat Troops Tax Relief Act. I am very pleased that the first provision in the HEART Act is taken from my tax bill.

This bill honors the patriotic commitment of military families such as the Heberts in southern Arizona. Army Specialist Adam Hebert is currently serving at Fort Huachuca. He is married with two children, and soon will be deployed abroad for combat service. This bill will give the Heberts concrete tax relief. It will permanently protect their eligibility for the Earned Income Tax Credit.

In southern Arizona and across the United States, we must honor our heroes with true tax relief. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join with me to pass H.R. 3997, the HEART Act.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS), a good friend of the American veteran as well, for 1 minute.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues from the Ways and Means Committee for including provisions from H.R. 337 and H.R. 551 in the HEART Act. These are two important bills that I have been championing since I came to Congress.

The first bill addresses a glitch in the SSI program. Because eligibility for SSI benefits is based on a family's income, military families lose benefits when additional pay is added to their income. A military family struggling to make ends meet loses benefits for their children if they receive jump pay, hazardous duty pay or a number of other pays considered "unearned income." I think I speak for my colleagues when I say these pays are not unearned but hard earned.

The second bill addresses qualified veterans mortgage bonds. And as a Californian, I join with other colleagues in the desire to provide veterans who signed up for service after 1977 with a better opportunity to achieve homeownership. Why should a veteran who served in Iraq be treated any differently than somebody who signed up before 1977? Correcting this flaw in current law will allow those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to have

great opportunities towards owning a home in California's high-cost real estate market.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. FARR), a friend of the American veteran as well.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the leadership of the Ways and Means Committee and the members because I think this bill takes a commonsense approach of having, as you have heard, the stories told about people who have had problems that just don't make sense. This is sort of fix the dumb-dumb in the tax law, and that is what this bill does for military veterans, volunteer firefighters, and eligible Peace Corps volunteers and others.

I am pleased that the committee included my legislation I authorized to provide tax relief for thousands of military retirees whose VA disability claims have been delayed by dysfunctional VA claims backlog.

The issue was brought to my attention by a constituent, Michael St. Germain, whose VA claim took over 8 years to process. Imagine, 8 years to process one VA claim. I am proud in the MilCon-VA appropriations bill that we have appropriated \$124 million to provide 1,800 new claims processors to work on the 400,000 backlog of claims. I thank the committee for extending for another 2 years the claims adjustment.

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

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire of the other gentleman, does he have just one more speaker?

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. I believe we have concluded the speakers who have asked for time on our side.

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In conclusion, I believe the case has been made compellingly that this legislation consists of many components, but they have been developed within the Ways and Means Committee as a benefit for our veterans and our active duty military.

I don't believe there is a great controversy here. What I do believe is there is a lesson. When Republicans and Democrats work together on a bipartisan basis, when they put aside political posturing, when they put aside ideological poses, when they insist on procedural fairness, then I think we can find common ground to move forward on things that are genuinely important.

I want to particularly credit the chairman of our committee, Mr. RANGEL, and the gentleman from Massachusetts, the chairman of our Select Revenue Subcommittee, for having moved this legislation forward and having set a very high standard. And I would like to take credit for the fact that there has been substantial Republican participation in the development of this bill.

This bill, I think, is important to move forward now, but not only for what it consists of, but for what it symbolizes, and that is what this Chamber can achieve when both parties work together.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. 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 H.R. 3997, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SERRANO). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

First of all, I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) for the usual courtesy that he extends to all Members of this body, and particularly those of us who are on the Ways and Means Committee. I also wish to acknowledge Chairman RANGEL and Mr. MCCRERY who worked to accommodate suggestions from several Members of the House. We thank those Members, both Republicans and Democrats, for generating many of the good ideas contained in this bipartisan bill.

Let me describe some of the provisions in this bill. The bill makes permanent the current provision waiving the 10 percent withdrawal penalty for those called up to active duty who need to tap into retirement accounts.

The bill allows families to roll over amounts received as death gratuity benefits into Roth IRAs or education savings accounts.

The bill makes a number of changes related to supplemental security income or SSI eligibility and military service.

And the bill makes permanent the special rule treating combat pay as earned income for the purposes of the earned income tax credit, or EITC.

The bill also provides a number of changes to allow employers the flexibility to extend benefits to workers called up to duty and will expand certain provisions that provide mortgage assistance to veterans through qualified bond programs.

The bill also includes incentives for those who volunteer their services Stateside, such as firefighters and emergency responders.

And for those who had an opportunity to attend our hearing and listen to the moving testimony by the widow of a Reservist whose pension was cut in half because he did not "return to work" after being killed in action, you will be pleased to know, as all Members of the body will, that this bill we are considering today fixes that problem for good.

The British leader Benjamin Disraeli noted, "The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inher-

itance of a great example." Let us set our own example today of a Congress that responds to families in need. Let us show our heroes and their families that we acknowledge and appreciate their service.

Not only do I encourage support for this bipartisan bill, I want to reiterate what was stated a few moments ago by my friend, Mr. ENGLISH. This is a very firm example of what happens in this House of Representatives when Members put aside differences and proceed with the common principle that American veterans deserve help. So let us show our support for this legislation. I urge adoption of this bill.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 3997, the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax, HEART Act of 2007. This bill provides a number of much-needed and deserved tax benefits to members of the military, their families, and veterans. Specifically, I am proud that the Qualified Veterans' Mortgage Bonds, QVMB, program, which impacts my home State of Wisconsin, was renewed and reformed so that the dream of home-ownership will continue to be a reality for thousands of veterans.

Under the HEART Act, the QVMB program will be expanded to allow \$100 million annually in tax-exempt bonding for the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, WDVA, State veterans home loan program—enough funding to aid about 600 State veterans in obtaining low-interest rate home loans. This program is more important now than ever before with the ongoing credit crisis in this country, and I am proud we were able to expand this crucial program. In Wisconsin alone, the WDVA has made over 54,000 home loans to veterans through this program.

Our military servicemen and women have sacrificed a great deal to protect the freedoms that we so deeply cherish in this country. Their sacrifices and extended tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, however, have placed greater economic hardships on their families here at home. The bill before us today will help alleviate some of those hardships by giving military families much needed and deserved tax relief and making permanent some of the temporary provisions that Congress has previously enacted.

The HEART Act is one simple but significant way we can thank our troops for their service to our country. I thank Chairman RANGEL and Ranking Member MCCRERY for their bipartisan leadership on this legislation and I urge my colleagues to support our men and women in the military by passing this legislation.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 3997, the Heroes Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax Act. I am especially pleased that this bill includes a crucial provision from H.R. 3736, the Combat Pay Tax Flexibility Act, which I recently introduced to permanently allow members of the Armed Forces to treat combat pay as earned income in calculating their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Because income earned while serving in a combat zone is exempt from income taxes, many low-income military families recently faced the loss or reduction of their EITC, as deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan shifted their income to nontaxable combat pay. While Congress acted to fix this problem by providing troops the option of calculating combat

pay for the EITC, without further Congressional action this tax credit will expire at the end of the year.

I introduced the Combat Pay Tax Flexibility Act to ensure that this tax savings provision is always there for the military families that need it. Soldiers who serve in hostile places make a great sacrifice for our country, and the least we can do is help them make the most of the tax savings available to them.

I would like to thank Chairman RANGEL for working with me to incorporate the Combat Pay Tax Flexibility Act into the legislation before us today, and for moving this legislation swiftly. I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 3997 today to ensure that our troops have the financial resources they need throughout the cycle of deployment.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased this bill, H.R. 3997, is being considered by the House today and specifically that it includes language similar to the legislation, H.R. 2540, introduced by myself and Congressman POMEROY.

Our legislation was written to assist the families of members of our military and National Guard who are killed while on active duty. It was developed after Congressman POMEROY and I each met with Mrs. Victoria Johnson from my central Washington district.

While grieving the loss of her husband, Major Alan Johnson, Victoria discovered that State law treated her husband as a retiree rather than a brave servicemember. Victoria worked to change State law, and with her support, Congressman POMEROY and I introduced legislation to ensure that servicemembers who die protecting our Nation will have their time on active military duty counted into their employer's retirement benefits.

This simple change ensures that the survivors of our brave servicemembers, like Major Johnson, receive the maximum amount of their loved ones' pension benefits, and are not penalized for their family members' volunteering to serve their country.

This is the right thing to do and I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. 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 Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3997, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

EXPRESSING SYMPATHY FOR VICTIMS OF OCTOBER 28, 2007, FIRE IN OCEAN ISLE BEACH, NORTH CAROLINA

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the reso-

lution (H. Res. 787) expressing the support and sympathy of the House of Representatives and the people of the United States for the victims of the tragic fire that occurred in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina, on October 28, 2007.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 787

Whereas in the early morning of October 28, 2007, flames broke out at a beach house in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina;

Whereas the fire spread quickly and took the lives of seven college students, six attended the University of South Carolina and one went to Clemson University: Lauren Mahon of Simpsonville, South Carolina; Allison Walden of Chagrins Falls, Ohio; Travis Cale, Justin Anderson and Emily Yelton of Greenville, South Carolina; William Rhea of Florence, South Carolina; and Cassidy Pendley of Chapin, South Carolina;

Whereas 6 University of South Carolina students were injured while escaping the flames and were treated at Brunswick Community Hospital;

Whereas local community members rushed to alert and assist emergency personnel to support the students and their families in the aftermath of the tragedy;

Whereas firefighters, paramedics, police officers, and other emergency personnel from the surrounding communities responded quickly and worked bravely to rescue the injured and extinguish the fire;

Whereas the State of North Carolina and local government officials responded to the fire and its aftermath quickly, effectively, and compassionately;

Whereas the immediate outpouring of support, assistance and compassion from the Nation and South Carolinians is greatly appreciated; and

Whereas the students, faculty, staff, and officials at Clemson University and University of South Carolina have come together as a university community to remember the fallen students and provide strength and support to its respective campuses through this difficult time: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its deepest condolences to the families and friends of Lauren Mahon, Allison Walden, Travis Cale, Justin Anderson, Emily Yelton, William Rhea, and Cassidy Pendley; and offers its hope for the quick and full recovery of those students who were injured in the fire;

(2) expresses immense gratitude for the efforts of countless emergency response personnel, local, State, and Federal officials, health care providers, volunteers, and citizens who have been part of the response; and

(3) expresses its support for all of the students, faculty, administration, and staff at the University of South Carolina and Clemson University as they heal from this tragedy.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) and the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. JORDAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased to join my colleagues in the consideration of H. Res. 787 which expresses the support and sympathy of the House of Representatives of the people of the United States for the victims of the tragic fire recently that occurred in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina. House Resolution 787, which has 66 cosponsors, was introduced by my friend and colleague Mr. JAMES CLYBURN.

Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, October 28, 2007, seven college students perished in a fire in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina. They were victims of an early morning fire that engulfed a two-story house. There were also six survivors who were hospitalized but later released.

Of the seven students who perished, six were from the University of South Carolina, and one was from Clemson University.

We in this Congress express our heartfelt sympathy for the victims, their families and the campus communities that have been affected.

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These students were among our best and brightest. Their striving, their aspirations, and the hope and support of their families, especially their parents, for their future embodies a shining example of what is best about America.

The Ocean Isle Beach's fire claimed the precious lives of seven young people who had so much to live for and so much to give. We express our deepest sympathy to the victims and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague Representative JIM CLYBURN for seeking to express the deepest sympathy of the House of Representatives on this sad occasion, and I urge the swift passage of this bill.

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

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise to mourn the passing of seven of this Nation's young students. On the morning of October 28, 2007, a fire quickly swept through the beach house in Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina, where they were spending a weekend.

Six of the seven were students at the University of South Carolina. The seventh attended Clemson. All were filled with much promise.

With this in mind, I express my deepest condolences to the friends and families of the seven. Rest assured that you are in all of our thoughts and prayers.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the entire community of Ocean Isle Beach, North Carolina, for its response to this tragedy. From the very onset of the flames, local citizens rushed to alert and assist