

bill. The President has agreed to sign this bill. Instead, the Democratic leadership has decided to use funding for our veterans as a smokescreen in an effort to pass billions in unrelated domestic spending.

Our veterans are not pawns in a political game. They are heroes. These funding issues should have been considered separately and on their own merits. Please join me in calling upon the Democratic leadership to put our veterans first and send a clean Veterans appropriation bill to the President now.

IN SUPPORT OF EQUITY FOR FILIPINO VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II

(Ms. HIRONO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, Filipino veterans are those who answered the call of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and served alongside our Armed Forces during World War II. They fought shoulder-to-shoulder with American servicemen, and we promised to provide full veterans benefits to them. While we have made some progress toward that goal, we have not yet achieved the full equity that the Filipino veterans deserve.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of H.R. 760, the Filipino Veterans Equity Act, which, in essence, makes good on the promise that our government made to these brave men over 60 years ago.

Our Filipino veterans are in the twilight of their lives. Of the 250,000 soldiers that fought with us, only 18,000 survive today. Of that number, 2,000 reside in my State of Hawaii.

As we honor our veterans all across the country this Veterans Day, let us include those Filipino veterans who still await a promise unfulfilled.

BIBLES PROHIBITED IN CHINA

(Mr. MCCOTTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCCOTTER. Mr. Speaker, as the world stumbles toward the Communist propaganda extravaganza labeled the Beijing Olympics, somewhere Chairman Mao is looking up at us and laughing.

According to the Catholic News Agency, Bibles and all other religious symbols are among Communist China's list of athletes' "prohibited objects" due to "security concerns."

Since the leader of the Free World, President Bush, has articulated his eagerness to attend Communist China's Olympics, I am compelled to ask three questions:

Mr. President, how many Bibles will you be taking to Beijing? Will you visit the five bishops and 15 priests in prison for opposing the Communist regime's official church? And will you tell Chi-

na's Communist tyrants this fundamental truth: No good government denies God's presence.

HONORING OUR VETERANS

(Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank our Nation's veterans and their families for their dedication, their service and their sacrifice.

As we approach Veterans Day, I commend the Democratic leadership for working with our Senate colleagues to pass a Veterans appropriations bill last night. This bill is the largest increase in veterans funding ever, \$3.7 billion over what the President asked.

This bill will provide our veterans with desperately needed health care services, including funds specifically allocated to treat the rising number of veterans with traumatic brain injury and PTSD.

To date, we have lost more than 4,000 troops and 30,000 troops have been wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq. We must do everything we can to take care of our servicemembers when they come home to their families and their communities, and we will bring them home. But until that day, this Congress will do everything we can to take care of our veterans and their families.

BIPARTISANSHIP

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Bipartisanship. You hear this expression tossed around quite frequently in political circles, so much so that perhaps it has almost become a cliché.

Sadly, we don't see genuine examples of bipartisan cooperation in this Chamber enough, and this no doubt disappoints the American people. Over 140 days ago, Democrats and Republicans worked together to pass one of the largest necessary spending increases in the 77-year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs. To ensure the health and well-being of our veterans, this bill is a needed investment veterans care about and the care they need to receive.

Eight weeks ago, a similar version passed the Senate on a bipartisan basis. Instead of allowing the House and Senate to iron out minor differences yesterday, the House leadership insisted that veterans funding be held hostage for a wasteful, pork-barrel spending bill that would increase the deficit by \$10 billion.

No doubt this shameful game further disappointed the already jaded public perception of Congress.

Let's get back to bipartisanship and swiftly pass this important legislation in its original form. Then together, on behalf of our veterans, we can all celebrate when it becomes law.

VETERANS FUNDING BILL

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, as a veteran of the United States, I rise in support of the House bill on veterans funding.

Over the last 5 years, hundreds of thousands of Americans, military personnel, have bravely served this country in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I am proud that North Carolina is home to many of these soldiers and also has one of the highest veteran populations in the country. Unfortunately, VA health care is still not adequately prepared to care for those who are returning from combat. Today, nearly 400,000 veterans are faced with unreasonable delays for their claims to be processed.

Yesterday, this Democratic House once again fulfilled its commitment to our veterans by passing a conference report that is \$3.7 billion over President Bush's request for veterans medical care, claims processing personnel and for facility improvements. The conference report includes the largest increase in funding in the 77-year history of the VA to fund these health care needs, as well as funds for 1,800 new processors to alleviate the claims backlog.

Despite a veto threat from this President, who is spending millions of dollars on roads, schools and health care in Iraq and Afghanistan, this House passed the VA funding bill on a vote of 269-142. The Senate should follow our lead, and the President should reverse his course and sign this vital bill into law.

MASTER GUNNERY SERGEANT JAMES PETERSON

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, a man that is faithful to his family, church and community, MGySgt James Peterson is distinguished and honored as a true American veteran.

His unit invaded Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945, and he fought bravely to see the American flag flown over Mount Suribachi. He then served 30 months in the South Pacific, after which he was assigned to be a drill instructor at the recruit depot in San Diego.

In honor of our veterans who have served and are serving this country now, MGySgt James Peterson of Aiken, South Carolina, is truly an American soldier through and through. Americans are in debt for his service in the Marine Corps, and Mr. Peterson will always be honored as an American soldier who fought to defend American freedom.