

ensure that their expertise is properly utilized and that our veterans receive the care they deserve. Their utilization may also mean in rural States like mine that veterans have greater access to health care.

It's appropriate that we will pass this legislation today in honor of the veterans who have served our country so bravely. As a proud wife of a veteran myself, working to improve the care veterans were promised and have earned is a top priority for me, and I enthusiastically support this legislation. I urge my colleagues to support this also.

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

Mr. HARE. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to unanimously support H.R. 2790, as amended.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Congressman HARE for his leadership on passage of this bill and my colleagues and staff on the House Veterans Affairs Committee for their support. I joined Congressman HARE as an original cosponsor of H.R. 2790. This bill creates a full-time Director of PA Services within the Department of Veterans Affairs. This legislation is beneficial in improving patient care for our Nation's veterans, ensuring that the 1,600 PAs employed by the VA are fully utilized to provide veterans medical care.

As a Member of Congress who represents one of the most rural districts in the country, I know that physician assistants are a key to providing medical care in underserved areas. Often, they are the only health care professional available. PAs help ensure those who live in our communities receive timely access to quality health care.

I want to be certain that PAs are appropriately utilized by the VA to serve our veterans. Like our armed forces that have full-time directors of PA services, this legislation will establish a dedicated expert in the VA Central Office. This PA Director will work to fully integrate the profession into VA health care, ensuring PAs have a stronger voice in the VA so they can better serve our veterans and their patients.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HARE. 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. 2790, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HARE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2790, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1230

VETERANS BENEFITS AWARENESS ACT OF 2008

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3681) to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to advertise in the national media to promote awareness of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3681

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

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Veterans Benefits Awareness Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO ADVERTISE TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF BENEFITS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY.

(a) AUTHORITY TO ADVERTISE.—Subchapter II of chapter 5 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§532. Authority to advertise in national media

"The Secretary may purchase advertising in national media outlets for the purpose of promoting awareness of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary, including promoting awareness of assistance provided by the Secretary, including assistance for programs to assist homeless veterans, to promote veteran-owned small businesses, and to provide opportunities for employment in the Department of Veterans Affairs and for education, training, compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation, and healthcare benefits, and mental healthcare (including the prevention of suicide among veterans)."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 531 the following:

"§532. Authority to advertise in national media."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. I would yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a package of 10 separate pieces of legislation that honors our Nation's veterans, our Nation's most deserving citizens, appropriately enough, as we prepare to honor them on Memorial Day. As we honor our fallen heroes, we cannot forget those who need either health or other benefits from our Nation.

That is what these bills do. They extend benefits in a whole range of areas: Health care, substance abuse and spina bifida, reimbursement for emergency treatment outside the VA facilities, construction of new facilities to serve these heroes. We also address our responsibility for oversight of the VA by mandating the revision and update of administrative policies so that the VA can better serve our veterans.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, we have had many opportunities for oversight recently. We have had in a court case the discovery of e-mails which seem to indicate that our VA management was not being totally transparent on the number of suicides, for example, of our recent Iraqi veterans. Just last week, another e-mail was discovered that indicated that we should not adequately diagnose PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, and instead give these young men and women lesser kinds of diagnoses, which would cost us less.

It is unacceptable to the Congress of the United States and to the American people that the administration set up to serve our veterans would be finding ways to save money and not treating the veterans for their needs. We intend to root that kind of attitude out of the VA and to make sure that all our veterans, whether they are just coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan, or those that served us earlier in Vietnam or World War II and Korea and the Persian Gulf War I, to make sure that all of their needs are met, and that is what we are committed to and that is what these bills on the floor today indicate.

We also address the compensation cost-of-living adjustment that is so important to our veterans who base their income on the dependency and indemnity compensation. They need an annual increase to cover the cost of living, and this bill before us today will assure that.

It is my hope that on this Memorial Day we, as a Nation, remember the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. A half century ago he said "Those who have long enjoyed such privileges as we enjoy forget in time that men," and he would say, I am sure today, women, "have died to win them." President Washington, over 220 years ago, said, "The best guarantee of the morale of our fighting troops is a sense of how they are going to be treated when they come home."

So let us remember these words of Roosevelt, of Washington, as we prepare on Memorial Day to recognize and remember those heroes who have died in uniform. Our Nation has a proud legacy of appreciation and commitment, and we have to make sure that they know that we appreciate them and we know that our liberty, which we enjoy today, depended on them.

The bills before us today have come from all of our legislative subcommittees. Members on both sides of the aisle and all the committee worked very hard. I want to thank Chairman MICHAUD of the Health Committee, with his Ranking Member MILLER of Florida, I want to thank the chair and ranking member of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN of South Dakota, and Mr. BOOZMAN of Arkansas, and also the chair and the ranking member of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, the gentleman from New York, Mr. HALL, and the gentleman from Colorado, Mr. LAMBORN.

We are now looking at H.R. 3681, which would authorize the VA Secretary to purchase national media outlets to inform veterans of their benefits. You would think we would not have to do such legislation, Mr. Speaker, but apparently we do. Over the past 2 years, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs has conducted several hearings to determine how to improve the outreach to our veterans, and while various agencies have made tremendous improvement, more needs to be done to inform veterans of the entitlements they rightfully deserve and how to access those benefits.

Providing our veterans the information they need on television is a crucial component that can affect the livelihood of our veterans and their dependents. So I ask all of you to join me in supporting H.R. 3681.

I would reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise in strong support of H.R. 3681, as amended, called the Veterans Benefits Awareness Act of 2008, which would amend title 38 of the U.S. Code to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to advertise in the national media to promote awareness of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

I additionally want to thank my colleague, Mr. BOOZMAN, for introducing this bill, as well as Chairman Herseth Sandlin of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, and Chairman FILNER of the full committee, for expediting this bill through the committee process to bring it to the floor.

Mr. Speaker, as anyone who watches TV or listens to the radio experiences advertising aimed at convincing them of the need for, or the quality of a product or a service, businesses buy advertising, sometimes at very expensive prices because it works. VA should be doing the same thing to bring its outreach programs into the 21st century. H.R. 3681 will clarify VA's authority to use advertising to increase veterans' awareness of the benefits and services that are offered by VA.

I urge my colleagues to support this fine measure and reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to a very hard working new member of our committee, in fact, the highest enlisted man ever elected to the Congress of the United States, Command Sergeant Major TIM WALZ of Minnesota.

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Thank you to the chairman for his outstanding and tireless work for our veterans. A special thank you also to Mr. BOOZMAN, who has been an unending friend and supporter and effective leader in helping our veterans. I thank you. This is just one more example of your continued work.

I stand in strong support of H.R. 3681, the Veterans Benefits Awareness Act. This just simply, as you have heard the

speakers talk about, ensures the ability of the VA to reach out and gather our veterans back in, making sure that those veterans understand all the benefits that are available to them, from suicide prevention to health care benefits, training, education, pension benefits, vocational rehabilitation, assistance for homeless veterans, veterans owning small businesses.

This Nation and this past Congress in the 110th Congress has done much to care for our veterans. One of the problems is that when our veterans return home, only about 36 percent of them enter into the VA system or apply for benefits, and what this does is take advantage of what all 435 Members of this body know well, is you need to advertise well to get that message out. The Department of Defense has done a great job of advertising for recruitment. It's time for the VA to put that money into making sure our veterans get their care.

The Rand Corporation said the capacity of the DOD and the VA to provide mental health services has increased substantially, but significant gaps in access and quality remain. There is a large gap between the need for mental health services and the use of those services.

Last year, this Congress put in a hotline for veterans seeking help with possible suicide and suicide prevention, and that hotline has received over 9,000 calls. Those may have been calls that would have never been received. So this 24-hour national hotline is working. I am pleased that the amendment that I put in to address this with the veterans suicide issue has been addressed. I would also like to thank the ranking member, Representative BUYER from Indiana, for his perfecting amendment on this bill.

This piece of legislation is a great example of bipartisan support that rises above and transcends politics to care for our Nation's veterans. This will be a good piece of legislation. It will get our veterans in. It will fulfill our moral obligation to care for our veterans and it will ensure that future generations of our young Americans understand that if they raise their hands, take an oath, and service this Nation, we will be there to serve them.

With that, I again thank Mr. BOOZMAN. I thank the ranking member and I thank the chairman for continuously moving information and moving legislation forward that helps our veterans.

This bill will ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs is able to use the power of modern advertising to reach out in as wide-ranging and an effective way as possible to our veterans.

The bill authorizes the Secretary of the VA to purchase advertising in the national media about the benefits VA makes available to veterans. VA offers health care and mental health care benefits, including for the prevention of suicide, an issue that we have been vigorously addressing on the House Veterans Committee; education, training, compensation, and

pension benefits; vocational rehabilitation; assistance for homeless veterans, opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses; and direct opportunities for employment in the Department itself, among other things.

But if veterans don't know about these benefits, they're not in a position to take full advantage of them.

There is more than enough evidence that advertising works to promote awareness of whatever the advertising is about. Study after study has shown that advertising through the major media works. In fact, the Department of Defense itself knows that. That's why it devotes a lot of time and energy to advertising, including on television, as a means of recruitment.

We advertise to recruit our servicemembers, many of whom will put themselves in harm's way; that same means should be used to tell them what benefits they have earned when they return. In effect, we are saying to VA, "If our veterans aren't coming to you, use the modern media to go to them!"

This bill is also a perfect illustration of how we on the House Veterans Affairs Committee strive to work on a bipartisan basis to serve our veterans. This bill was introduced by Congressman BOOZMAN on behalf of himself and Congresswoman HERSETH SANDLIN. I offered an amendment to the bill, and then one of my Republican colleagues offered a perfecting amendment, which I was happy to accept. In that way, we worked together to produce a bill that is good for our veterans.

My amendment specified that the advertising VA would do could and should include a focus on suicide prevention, which has been an issue of much concern and some controversy lately. There have been several recent reports about VA's sometimes halting efforts to address what appears to be a series of major emerging mental health problems among our veterans. I have a great deal of confidence in the new Secretary of VA, whom I have been working with on a number of issues, and his commitment to resolve the problems that exist at VA and better serve our veterans.

An excellent and disturbing new report from the think tank the Rand Corp. observed that "The capacity of DoD and the VA to provide mental health services has increased substantially, but significant gaps in access and quality remain," and went on to say in particular, "There is a large gap between the need for mental health services and the use of those services." My amendment was meant to encourage VA to bridge that gap.

On July 25, 2007, the VA began operation of a 24-hour national suicide prevention hotline for veterans. The hotline reported greater than 9,000 calls. Callers included veterans who previously would have called a non-VA suicide hotline, veterans who would not have utilized a non-VA hotline, family members and friends of veterans, and other distressed non-veterans. Bottom line—veterans are calling the hotline. It is common sense that with more outreach, more veterans are likely to call the VA hotline. And advertising in the national media is one form of that outreach.

I am pleased that my amendment to this legislation was adopted, and perfected with the help of the Ranking Member on the VA Committee, Representative BUYER.

I strongly urge the passage of H.R. 3681.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield such time as he

may consume to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN), who has been a strong supporter of VA issues his entire time here in the House of Representatives.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Thank you, Congressman MILLER. Thank you, Congressman WALZ. I always feel like he speaks with such authority when I am around him; I am always concerned he is going to ask me to do 10 pushups or something.

I rise in support of H.R. 3681, the Veterans Benefits Awareness Act. This simple, straightforward legislation authorizes VA to purchase advertising in national media outlets for the purpose of promoting awareness of veterans benefits.

When was the last time you saw the Super Bowl or other prime time recruiting advertisement for one of the military services? Now, when was the last time that you saw the Super Bowl or other prime time ad for veterans health care and benefits sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Probably never. It's one reason that many veterans and their dependents are not aware of the benefits due to them.

Over the years, Congress has authorized millions to improve outreach, and the results are disappointing. In spite of the additional funding, VA still relies on the public service announcements, pamphlets, meetings with small groups of veterans, and the one-on-one outreach to deliver its message to veterans. Unfortunately, PSAs are often most broadcast at times when few people are watching, and small groups and individual meetings are often difficult to arrange and are not very efficient.

Our veterans continue to tell us that they were not aware of the VA programs that would improve their lives. That is why I introduced H.R. 3681, the Veterans Benefits Awareness Act of 2008, which authorizes VA to purchase advertising in national media outlets for the purpose of promoting awareness of veterans benefits.

H.R. 3681 will provide VA with the authority to buy radio and TV time to ensure that veterans and their dependents are aware of health care options and benefits for education, disability compensation, nondisability pensions, training, loan guarantees, and survivors' programs.

I want to thank Chairwoman HERSETH SANDLIN for moving this bill, for her cooperation in working with the subcommittee; Chairman FILNER, and Ranking Member BUYER for their support; and also to our staffs that worked so hard in preparing these bills. I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3681.

Mr. FILNER. I have no further speakers.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. We have no further speakers. We urge adoption and yield back the balance of our time.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 3681, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3681, the "Veterans Benefits Awareness Act" which authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to advertise in the national media to promote awareness of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

As an original cosponsor of H.R. 3681, and the Chairwoman of the Veterans' Affairs Economic Opportunity Subcommittee, I would like to thank Representative BOOZMAN, who serves as the Subcommittee Ranking Member, for introducing this important bill. I also would like to recognize Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for their strong leadership and for working to quickly move this bill to the House floor.

It is important that Congress not only provide the VA with the resources to properly care for our nation's veterans, but that we also provide them with the authority to promote awareness of benefits that are available to veterans and their dependents.

Again, I thank Representative BOOZMAN for introducing this important bill. I encourage my colleagues to support it.

Mr. FILNER. I urge all my colleagues to support H.R. 3681 and yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3681, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on three motions to suspend the rules previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 6081, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 6074, by the yeas and nays;

H. Res. 1144, de novo.

The first electronic vote will be conducted as a 15-minute vote. Remaining electronic votes will be conducted as 5-minute votes.

HEROES EARNINGS ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF TAX ACT OF 2008

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6081, as amended, on which the yeas and nays were ordered.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by

the gentleman from New York (Mr. RANGEL) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 6081, as amended.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 403, nays 0, not voting 30, as follows:

[Roll No. 331]

YEAS—403

Abercrombie	Cuellar	Issa
Ackerman	Culberson	Jackson (IL)
Aderholt	Cummings	Jackson-Lee
Akin	Davis (AL)	(TX)
Alexander	Davis (CA)	Jefferson
Allen	Davis (KY)	Johnson (GA)
Altmire	Davis, David	Johnson, E. B.
Arcuri	Davis, Lincoln	Johnson, Sam
Baca	Deal (GA)	Jones (NC)
Bachmann	DeFazio	Jordan
Bachus	DeGette	Kagen
Baird	Delahunt	Delahunt
Baldwin	DeLauro	Kanjorski
Barrett (SC)	Dent	Kaptur
Barrow	Dicks	Keller
Bartlett (MD)	Doggett	Kildee
Barton (TX)	Donnelly	Kilpatrick
Bean	Doolittle	Kind
Becerra	Doyle	King (IA)
Berkley	Drake	King (NY)
Berman	Dreier	Kirk
Berry	Duncan	Klein (FL)
Biggert	Edwards	Kline (MN)
Bilbray	Ehlers	Knollenberg
Bilirakis	Ellison	Kucinich
Bishop (GA)	Ellsworth	Kuhl (NY)
Bishop (NY)	Emanuel	LaHood
Bishop (UT)	Emerson	Lamborn
Blackburn	English (PA)	Lampson
Blunt	Eshoo	Langevin
Boehner	Etheridge	Larsen (WA)
Bonner	Everett	Larson (CT)
Bono Mack	Fallin	Latham
Boozman	Farr	LaTourette
Boren	Fattah	Latta
Boswell	Feeney	Lee
Boucher	Filner	Levin
Boustany	Flake	Lewis (CA)
Boyd (FL)	Forbes	Lewis (GA)
Boyda (KS)	Fortenberry	Lewis (KY)
Brady (PA)	Fossella	Linder
Brady (TX)	Foster	Lipinski
Braley (IA)	Fox	LoBiondo
Broun (GA)	Frank (MA)	Loeb
Brown (SC)	Franks (AZ)	Lofgren, Zoe
Brown, Corrine	Frelinghuysen	Lowey
Brown-Waite,	Galleghy	Lucas
Ginny	Garrett (NJ)	Lungren, Daniel
Buchanan	Gerlach	E.
Burgess	Giffords	Mack
Burton (IN)	Gingrey	Mahoney (FL)
Butterfield	Gohmert	Maloney (NY)
Buyer	Gonzalez	Manzullo
Calvert	Goode	Marchant
Camp (MI)	Goodlatte	Markey
Campbell (CA)	Granger	Marshall
Cannon	Graves	Matsui
Cantor	Green, Al	McCarthy (CA)
Capito	Green, Gene	McCarthy (NY)
Capps	Grijalva	McCaul (TX)
Capuano	Hall (NY)	McCollum (MN)
Cardoza	Hall (TX)	McCotter
Carnahan	Hare	McCreery
Carney	Harman	McDermott
Carson	Hastings (FL)	McGovern
Carter	Hastings (WA)	McHenry
Castle	Hayes	McHugh
Castor	Heller	McIntyre
Cazayoux	Hensarling	McKeon
Chabot	Hergert	McNerney
Chandler	Herse	McNulty
Clarke	Herseth Sandlin	Meek (FL)
Clay	Higgins	Meeks (NY)
Cleaver	Hill	Melancon
Clyburn	Hinche	Mica
Coble	Hinojosa	Michaud
Cohen	Hirono	Miller (FL)
Cole (OK)	Hobson	Miller (MI)
Conaway	Hodes	Miller (NC)
Conyers	Hoekstra	Miller, Gary
Cooper	Holden	Miller, George
Costa	Holt	Mitchell
Costello	Honda	Mollohan
Courtney	Hooley	Moore (KS)
Cramer	Hoyer	Moore (WI)
Crowley	Hunter	Moran (KS)
Cubin	Inglis (SC)	Moran (VA)
	Inslee	Murphy (CT)