

There was no objection.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of H.R. 2245, my bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Wenatchee, Washington in honor of Elwood "Bud" Link.

Bud joined the Navy in 1941 and served on the destroyer USS *Tracy* that aided U.S. forces at Guadalcanal, Okinawa, and elsewhere in the Pacific. He was one of many residents of north central Washington who were called to serve their country during World War II. However, Bud's support for his Nation didn't stop when his military service ended.

As an active member of the local Cashmere Veterans of Foreign Wars post, Bud was a dedicated advocate for increased hometown health care. He experienced firsthand the long distances north central Washington veterans had to travel for even the most basic health care. In 2001, the Cashmere-Leavenworth VFW passed a motion to research the need for a VA clinic, and Bud quickly took the lead. He became a tireless proponent of bringing a veterans outpatient clinic to north central Washington.

Bud was instrumental in keeping the local veterans motivated, active and informed about how to successfully make a clinic a reality. He championed the clinic until his death in 2003.

For several years I worked with Bud Link and local veterans to make the case for a new clinic in north central Washington and press the VA when the project faced delays. Our hard work paid off in 2006 when the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved a new clinic. And, in 2007 I was very proud to attend the grand opening of the new VA clinic in Wenatchee.

As a tribute to Bud's work to support hometown health care for rural Washington state veterans, Senator PATTY MURRAY and I introduced legislation to name the clinic in Bud's honor.

This bill has the endorsement of the local community, the entire Washington state Congressional delegation, the Washington state Chapters of the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, and the Vietnam Veterans of America.

By officially naming this clinic in Wenatchee after Bud, we are paying respect to a local veteran who fought for the quality care his fellow veterans deserve.

I would like to thank Bud's wife, Helen, for her steadfast support of Bud's efforts. I would also like to thank the members of the Cashmere-Leavenworth VFW for their work to organize the local community in support of the clinic. Finally, I would like to thank Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for their work to bring this bill to the floor today.

I strongly encourage my colleagues to support H.R. 2245. Through this bill we are recognizing the heroic efforts of Bud Link and his work to improve the health care of his fellow veterans.

Mr. FILNER. I urge my colleagues to unanimously support this resolution, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2245.

The question was taken.

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### MICHAEL BILIRAKIS DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SPINAL CORD INJURY CENTER

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4264) to name the Department of Veterans Affairs spinal cord injury center in Tampa, Florida, as the "Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4264

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

#### SECTION 1. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SPINAL CORD INJURY CENTER, TAMPA, FLORIDA.

The spinal cord injury center located at the James A. Haley Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Tampa, Florida, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the "Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center". Any reference to such center in any law, regulation, map, document, record, or other paper of the United States shall be considered to be a reference to the "Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center".

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my support to name the VA Spinal Cord Injury Center in Tampa, Florida, after our former colleague, Michael Bilirakis, and I thank Mr. MILLER for bringing us this important resolution.

One of the virtues, I guess—although some people advise against this—of naming a facility after someone who's living and who's a former colleague is that we remember him. It's not a historical kind of moment. We have known Michael for many, many, many years in this House, and his efforts, of course, brought this particular center into being. And it's fitting that we recognize his efforts.

But he was responsible for a great many things. His background was in the Air Force where he served for 4 years. He left for the Congress in 1982, served here for 24 years, retired at the end of the last Congress, and we miss

his advocacy for veterans. Although, his son, GUS, has taken his place and is a member of our Veterans' Affairs Committee and I'm sure will achieve greatness in terms of his advocacy for veterans, also.

I just have to say personally about Mr. Bilirakis, if he is listening. Mike Bilirakis was a little old fashioned. He believed in civility, that, in fact, we should relate to each other as human beings. We could differ on issues, but we have to speak with respect and complete integrity in the way we deal with each other.

I will tell you that he was not always happy with some of my statements in my years on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, but he would not just let them go. He came up to me and explained why he thought I should take a different tone.

□ 1900

And he convinced me that working with the other party, working together on the committee, in fact, you can achieve much more. He really became the conscience of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I think he made that committee far more civil, and we miss him, of course, today.

I admired and watched him for many, many years deal with the issue that not too many people understood, it was called "concurrent receipt," that those who were retirees from our Armed Forces but who also were disabled from their time in the service would get both payments because they earned them both; and yet the law had offset them, and so the disabled veteran was actually paying for his disability.

Michael Bilirakis fought tirelessly to get rid of that offset, to have, in fact, concurrent receipt. He was able to achieve his goal for about half of the veterans. We're going to continue his work. And I know GUS is taking the lead to make sure we get full concurrent receipt and really honor him not only in the naming of this center, but in finally achieving that goal for really millions of veterans.

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4264, a bill to name the Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center in Tampa, Florida, as the "Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center."

Mr. Michael Bilirakis served in the United States Air Force from 1951 to 1955 and served Florida's Ninth District as Congressman for 24 years, from 1983 to 2007. As a veteran, Mike wanted to be a strong veterans' advocate in Congress, and specifically requested to be appointed to a seat on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Those of us who served with Mike on the committee well remember his hard work on what the chairman just spoke about, the issue of concurrent receipt. Since his first introduction of the legislation in the 99th Congress to eliminate the offset of the military pension

in order to receive the VA disability compensation, Mike consistently worked each Congress to have this legislation passed, including reintroducing the bill each consecutive Congress in which he had served.

When I served on the House Armed Services Committee as chairman of Military Personnel in the late 1990s, I went to Mr. Bilirakis and informed him that I had \$25 million, and I wanted to address the issue of concurrent receipt. And what we did was we first took that \$25 million and we said we're going to take care of those 100 percent combat-disabled veterans. And Mike and I felt pretty good about what we had done. We had moved incrementally, but we were going to take on this issue. Boy, did we find out that in the very next Congress we were being attacked. Here we thought we were doing great things on behalf of the veterans' community, and then Mr. Bilirakis and I then began to be attacked by all these other veterans who did not receive the benefits of concurrent receipt. Here we thought we were trying to do that which was best, open up the issue of concurrent receipt, address the 100 percent combat-disabled veterans, and then all of a sudden Michael Bilirakis and I were being attacked because we didn't do it for everyone. And Mike always took on these issues with great humor, self-deprecating humor, and for that I have great respect for him.

He also fought for the Survivor Benefit Plan and improvements for the widows of military retirees, dependency and indemnity compensation and survivors' benefits, veterans' equitable resource allocation, benefits and health care for former prisoners of war, hospice care for veterans, as well as the designation of the National Women Veterans Recognition Week.

Additionally, Congressman Michael Bilirakis sought and obtained funding for the following projects to serve veterans within his congressional district in the State of Florida. The Port Richey Outpatient Clinic, the Spinal Cord Injury Center at the James Haley VA Medical Center. We have the Florida National Cemetery, the Land O'Lakes Nursing Home, and the Sub-Regional Veterans Office in Tampa, Florida. Among his top priorities was obtaining the funding and resources for the Spinal Cord Injury Center located at the VA Medical Center in Tampa, Florida.

Mr. Speaker, for all of his outstanding work on behalf of our Nation's veterans, it is most appropriate today that we consider this legislation to name the Spinal Cord Injury Center after Michael Bilirakis.

I had the opportunity to tour this facility. And I welcome all of my colleagues, if you ever have the chance to be in Tampa, to visit the polytrauma center; go by this spinal cord facility. It is one of the most remarkable facilities that we have in the country in which we care for these veterans. And it's only fitting, since Mike worked so

hard on this particular facility, that it be named in his honor.

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

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

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) may consume, the ranking member of the Health Subcommittee.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. I thank the ranking member for yielding the time.

As you already know, for 24 years Mike Bilirakis served as a staunch advocate for veterans, not only on the floor of this House, but in the committee room, serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, including vice-chairman of the full committee. Mike strongly promoted equitable and improved benefits for all of our Nation's veterans and their families as well.

One of his signature efforts has already been talked about today, and that was concurrent receipt, H.R. 303. We all remember that very well because that was his signature bill that he pushed on the floor of this House. But his work was not just there. I mean, he was instrumental in seeing that the Department of Veterans Affairs took care of surviving spouses, as the ranking member just said, through the Survivor Benefit Plan. He reassured veterans everywhere that they were not forgotten. And as chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and investigations, he made sure that the VA carried out its mission through its responsibilities.

Another one of the key accomplishments of Mike's during his tenure was funding for the Spinal Cord Injury Center at the James Haley VA Medical Center. For 12 years, Mike worked tirelessly to see this center come to reality, and I think it's fitting that it be named after Congressman Bilirakis.

When the center opened in February of 2002, some 7,000 veterans from that area finally had a place that they could specifically go that was suited for their needs that they had, those unique needs. So Mr. Speaker, it is only fitting that this facility, providing groundbreaking research such as this one, be named after a person who gave everything that he had to see that veterans receive the care and attention that they deserve.

Veterans always knew they had a voice in Michael Bilirakis. Many of us got to serve with him very proudly here in Congress and applauded his enthusiasm. So it's my pleasure to stand today in support of this piece of legislation.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I now yield such time as he may consume to GUS BILIRAKIS of Florida, the son of Michael Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 4264 to name the Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center at the James Haley VA Medical Center in Tampa, Florida, after my father, former Congressman Michael Bilirakis.

I would like to thank Mr. MILLER for introducing this legislation, my colleagues from Florida for their support, and you, Mr. Speaker, as well as Chairman FILNER and Ranking Member BUYER for their leadership. I appreciate all of their hard work in recognizing my father's dedication to providing our veterans suffering from spinal cord injuries with a much needed state-of-the-art facility.

As a veteran himself, my father came to Washington in 1982 to be a strong advocate for our Nation's veterans in the halls of Congress. He served as a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs during all of his 12 terms in office. During the last 6 years of his career, he served as vice-chairman of the full committee. He also founded the Military Veterans Caucus in the 108th Congress.

Through his work on the committee, my father sought to recognize the great contributions of our Nation's veterans and the sacrifices made by their families. He consistently fought to ensure that veterans received the benefits and services that they earned through their military service. In fact, he often said that veterans' benefits were our one true "entitlement" because individuals had to earn their benefits by wearing our Nation's military uniform. It took 12 years to secure the funding, but the construction of the new Tampa SCI Center was one of my father's most important achievements in Congress.

There are over 3,000 veterans suffering from spinal cord injury disabilities living within the Tampa VA spinal cord injury service area, as well as another 3,000 to 4,000 veterans with spinal cord dysfunctions living in the region. Before the construction of this facility, the Tampa SCI Unit occupied space originally designed for psychiatric patients and was not well suited for the unique needs of SCI patients. My father made getting this spinal cord treatment center one of his top priorities while in Congress. As a matter of fact, he has dedicated his life to veterans; he is still working for veterans.

In total, he secured \$44 million for the construction of this facility, which serves as a much needed addition to the James Haley VA Medical Center. Since opening in February of 2002, it has provided essential services to local veterans suffering from these debilitating injuries.

My father will be so proud—and I appreciate all of you, my colleagues—and honored; he would be honored to have his name attached to the Spinal Cord Injury Center that he worked so hard to establish while in Congress. His leadership and his advocacy on behalf of veterans' issues continues today, as I said, and this bill brings the deserved recognition for one of his great accomplishments and his devoted mission to support our Nation's brave men and women.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire as to how much time I have remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Indiana has 11½ minutes.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as she may consume to Dr. LLEANA ROS-LEHTINEN of Florida.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I thank the gentleman from Indiana, the ranking member of Veterans' Affairs, for this time.

I am so honored to be here tonight congratulating our good friend, Mr. MILLER of Florida, for this bill, and Congressman BILIRAKIS, another Florida colleague, for speaking on this bill as well.

I rise in strong support of House Resolution 4264 to rightfully name the Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center in Tampa, Florida as the "Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center."

I had the honor and the pleasure of serving with Congressman Mike Bilirakis here in the House for almost 17 years. He was a colleague, a statesman, a fellow Floridian, Mike was and continues to be a strong voice for our country's men and women proudly serving our country. He was also an advocate for Florida's environment, including the protection of our pristine coastlines. But his time here in the House was truly defined by his supreme dedication to veterans, serving on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for his entire tenure in the U.S. House.

After 24 years in Congress, this fine public servant retired in 2006. However, we all have the wonderful pleasure to serve with his son, GUS BILIRAKIS, and I'm honored to serve with GUS on our Foreign Affairs Committee. We're delighted to see him follow in his father's footsteps in his passion for our veterans.

Naming this Department of Veterans Affairs after Congressman Mike Bilirakis is certainly a sound tribute to a man who gave so much to his community, to our brave service men and women, and indeed, to our country.

I urge all Members to vote in favor of this resolution that rightfully honors a man such as Congressman Mike Bilirakis, a friend to all, and especially to our veterans.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, our good friend, Michael Bilirakis, and his wife, Evelyn, I'm sure are listening right now. And to my good friend Michael, I know this is a little uncomfortable listening to your colleagues say nice things about you while you're alive, so I thank the chairman for doing this bill.

And we recognize you, Michael Bilirakis, because your presence here was significant. You heard a very personal admission on behalf of the chairman. And I think all of us on the committee could say the very same thing that the chairman had said. Michael was very good at keeping and maintaining civility, and it's about who he was as a person.

I also had the opportunity to serve with him on the powerful House En-

ergy and Commerce Committee. And we honor his work, not only on behalf of America's veterans, but I also remember his work on the Health Subcommittee. It worked out very well, his knowledge of Energy and Commerce along with his work on the Health Subcommittee on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. And he was able to integrate his work with Health and Human Services and NIH and research and met with the VA and research. Your work is highly recognized and remembered by the House.

But I also know that, Michael, if you were still here, you would be just as concerned as I am with regard to the high cost of energy because you voted on a lot of efforts to bring down energy prices for all Americans, which include our veterans.

□ 1915

So with that I urge all my colleagues to support the legislation before us in naming this spinal cord facility on behalf of Michael Bilirakis.

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

Mr. FILNER. To the now Congressman BILIRAKIS, you honor your father with your work on the committee and your advocacy, and we look forward to many years of that.

And, of course, Mr. Speaker, this is not an obituary. Mike Bilirakis is very much alive and working for veterans still. His work on the Commission for the Future of America's Veterans is important. It's going to be very timely. It's going to be significant. And I hope we all listen to what he says in his new role on that commission.

And, Michael, if you're watching, I don't always meet your ideal of civility, but I remember your teaching. I remember your example every day.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FILNER. 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. 4264.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 4264, legislation to designate the "Michael Bilirakis Department of Veterans Affairs Spinal Cord Injury Center" at the James A. Haley Hospital in Tampa.

First, I want to commend my colleague from Florida, JEFF MILLER, a distinguished member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, for introducing this legislation to honor our former colleague and my friend MIKE BILIRAKIS.

There is no member of this House who devoted more of his time and energy to improve the quality of care for our Nation's veterans than MIKE BILIRAKIS. Long a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, he made the establishment of the Spinal Cord Injury Unit at Tampa one of his highest legislative priorities.

As a result of these efforts, we have at Tampa the finest center of its kind anywhere in our Nation taking care of seriously injured veterans. We are thankful that MIKE had the

foresight to pursue this project as it has become a critical center in taking care of returning heroes from the war against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Naming the Spinal Cord Injury Center for MIKE BILIRAKIS will be a lasting tribute to a man who never forgot our Nation's commitment to our veterans. It is also a special honor to a member of this House who did not seek acclaim or recognition. He just worked hard every day for the people of his district and for the veterans who wore the uniform.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join in approving this legislation to honor one of this House's quiet heroes who is a champion of those who bore the uniform in the past, do so now, and will into the future.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to unanimously support the bill.

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 California (Mr. FILNER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4264.

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. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

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.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

#### EURIPIDES RUBIO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CLINIC.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4289) to name the Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Ponce, Puerto Rico, as the "Euripides Rubio Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic".

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 4289

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

#### SECTION 1. NAME OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OUTPATIENT CLINIC, PONCE, PUERTO RICO.

The Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in Ponce, Puerto Rico, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the "Euripides Rubio Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic". Any reference to such outpatient clinic in any law, regulation, map, document, record, or other paper of the United States shall be considered to be a reference to the Euripides Rubio Department of Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic.

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