

RECOGNIZING THE VITAL ROLE FAMILY READINESS VOLUNTEERS PLAY IN SUPPORTING SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 408) recognizing the vital role family readiness volunteers play in supporting servicemembers and their families.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 408

Whereas since 2001, nearly 2,000,000 active duty and reserve sailors, soldiers, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guard personnel have deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom;

Whereas the more than 1,800,000 family members of regular component members of the Armed Forces and an additional 1,100,000 family members of reserve component members make significant sacrifices on behalf of the United States in support of their loved ones deployed overseas;

Whereas the readiness of the United States Armed Forces is predicated on the ability of each member of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard to focus on their mission during deployments;

Whereas the military necessity of long and often unpredictable deployments, frequent relocations, and infrequent family contact for members of the Armed Forces can be extremely challenging for members and their families;

Whereas, in response to these sacrifices and challenges, family readiness volunteers from each branch of the Armed Forces have stepped forward to provide critical support during deployments to service members and their families;

Whereas the family readiness volunteer programs in each service help commanding officers have a better understanding of the welfare of the families within his or her command during a deployment and allow families to be informed about the status of their loved ones' unit overseas;

Whereas family readiness volunteers consist of Army Family Readiness Volunteers, Navy Ombudsmen, Coast Guard Ombudsmen, Air Force Key Spouse Volunteers, and Marine Corps Key Volunteers;

Whereas the thousands of family readiness volunteers are generally spouses of members of the Armed Forces who provide assistance to military families while also enduring the challenges of military life;

Whereas these volunteers are motivated by the desire to improve the lives of other military families and to assist future generations;

Whereas family readiness volunteers also connect the community with military families and local military installations, often leveraging donations and resources for military families;

Whereas family readiness volunteers provide their services on a voluntary basis, with little public recognition and financial assistance, and often contribute their own resources to help other military families; and

Whereas the outstanding performance of our service members is a testament to the great success of family readiness volunteers: Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives recognizes and honors the family readiness volunteers of each branch of the Armed Forces who selflessly devote their time, talent, energy, and resources in service to the

United States and commends family readiness volunteers for their dedicated contributions to the quality of life of members of the Armed Forces and their families.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 408. I introduced this resolution to honor the work of the Army's Family Readiness Volunteers, Air Force Key Spouse Volunteers, Navy Ombudsmen, Marine Corps Key Volunteers and Coast Guard Ombudsmen. Each day, thousands of these men and women volunteer their time to help improve the quality of life for military families by serving as a channel between deployed units and their loved ones at home. Most of these important volunteers are military spouses, frequently with a loved one deployed overseas.

I also introduced this measure to bring their efforts to the attention of all Americans. As chairwoman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, I know that today's all-volunteer force is, in many ways, less integrated into the society that they are sworn to protect. My hope is that this resolution will help shed light on a group of dedicated volunteers that the average American may know little about but who are a crucial component of military readiness. I firmly believe that the outstanding performance of our servicemembers is directly connected to their efforts, and with today's high operational tempo, their services are as important as ever.

Family Readiness volunteers and ombudsmen help our military families solve a variety of problems and meet the challenges servicemembers and their families face before, during, and after deployments. As Admiral Mullen wrote when he was Chief of Naval Operations, "A strong command Ombudsman Program, both ashore and afloat, will help ensure that families have the information necessary to meet the challenges of a military lifestyle."

Across each service, these volunteers also assist newly enlisted servicemembers and spouses and their families with a wide range of issues, from understanding their health and retirement benefits to serving as a conduit of information to the command.

Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate enough to be able to meet with Navy ombuds-

men in my district several times a year to discuss the issues that military families care most about, from everyday issues like day care to uniquely military issues such as coping with the deployment.

And, in fact, when I first came to Congress, it was a Navy ombudsman in San Diego who helped me understand the complex issues faced by our all-volunteer force. And just last week, I had the pleasure of meeting with over 100 Army Family Readiness Volunteers who traveled to Washington to learn how to improve their abilities to advocate on behalf of the families they help at home. I was inspired by the willingness of these women and men who traveled from across the United States for training that will ultimately help them support their soldiers.

When you meet with volunteers, you quickly realize that a key component to our overall military readiness is the readiness of our military families. In my view, and the view of our top military leaders, America's deployed men and women could not do their jobs abroad if they were constantly worried about their families back home. Simply put, Family Readiness volunteers and ombudsmen help reduce uncertainty and ease anxiety around deployments by keeping families involved so our servicemembers can stay focused on their mission.

Today, it would be really impossible for our military to mitigate some of the stresses of war if there was not the valuable and active family contact maintained by these individuals. With every year of war, these volunteers have taken on an increasing amount of responsibility, so much so that the services have even begun to compensate a small number of individuals for their efforts.

While volunteers help provide peace of mind for our deployed personnel, they also provide information about the status of a unit's deployment overseas.

I recall the role that the Navy ombudsmen played when the USS *New Orleans* and the USS *Hartford* collided in the Strait of Hormuz earlier this year. For the families of the sailors and marines aboard both ships, the news was startling. Families were all wondering the same things: Was their loved one injured? Was the ship still able to sail? How would the incident impact the length of their deployment?

The ombudsman for the USS *New Orleans*, a ship stationed in my district, recounted to my office how within 10 minutes of the news breaking, he had over 20 calls from concerned family members. It was at that point that he e-mailed his families a simple message, with the subject line reading: "USS New Orleans Collision, Everyone is safe." His message at a time of need let the families know not to worry.

□ 1045

This ombudsman told my office, "The emails and phone calls that I

fielded that day calmed my families. They were getting some bad news, but from a familiar voice . . . someone that they know and have spoken to . . . this does not necessarily make the news better but certainly more palatable.”

Many of the families of the sailors and marines aboard the USS New Orleans responded to the ship’s ombudsman about the valuable service he provided. One family member wrote, “Thank you so much for the updates. Having you as a connection to information to our loved ones has been critical and really important. My parents and I are incredibly grateful as we have been very worried about my sister.”

Another family member wrote and said, “Thank you. You have been helpful through this difficult time. I appreciate the phone call and the reassurance that everything was okay.”

Thanks to the work of this ombudsman, families at home had the right information at the right time. This is the invaluable role family readiness volunteers play and will continue to play as long as our military is at war.

Before I yield back, Mr. Speaker, I would like to strongly encourage all of my colleagues who have not yet had the opportunity to meet with these men and women to reach out to the family readiness volunteers and ombudsmen in their districts or States. I hope that they will do that. I also hope my colleagues will help me recognize the important role readiness volunteers and ombudsmen play in helping military families and honor their enormous contribution to our Nation’s defense by supporting this measure.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to rise today in support of resolution 408 and thank the author, Representative DAVIS of California, for putting this resolution forward.

This resolution commends a large group of selfless and dedicated people, the vast majority of whom are volunteers, in organizations that provide support to the families and children of deployed members of the Armed Forces as well as to the servicemembers themselves.

Because these organizations go by various names and work quietly and effectively behind the scenes, it’s important today that we acknowledge them explicitly. They are the Army Readiness Volunteers, the Navy Ombudsmen, the Coast Guard Ombudsmen, the Air Force Key Spouse Volunteers, and the Marine Corps Key Volunteers.

Our military families face extraordinary demands, stresses and challenges related to the service of their loved ones. To ease these burdens, family readiness groups unselfishly step in to connect military families with the community and with local military installations.

Among the approximately 2.9 million family members of those serving in the Active and Reserve components, the

needs are many, and supporting these needs is a matter of military readiness. The support challenge is made more complex because virtually all the families of National Guard troops and Reservists reside in civilian communities spread across this Nation. Yet the family readiness groups have taken on that challenge to provide help and support, particularly during extended periods of mobilization and deployment.

Our military forces could not have sustained the stress related to repeated deployments and combat without the assistance, dedication, and outstanding work over the years of these family readiness groups. Today’s resolution is a fitting way to celebrate and thank such dedicated volunteers.

Again, I want to thank Representative DAVIS for putting this resolution forward, and I urge my colleagues to support House Resolution 408.

I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. 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 gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 408.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### HONORING THE 56TH BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 754) honoring the citizen-soldiers of the National Guard of the State of Pennsylvania, including the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker) of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard on its return to the United States from deployment in Iraq.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

#### H. RES. 754

Whereas the members of the Army National Guard and Air National Guard of the State of Pennsylvania reside throughout the State and come from various communities, backgrounds, and professions;

Whereas units and members of the Pennsylvania National Guard have been deployed, and are continuously being deployed, in support of United States military operations at home and overseas in Iraq, Afghanistan, and dozens of other countries;

Whereas one such unit, the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker) of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, is composed of approximately 4,000 citizen-soldiers from throughout the State of Pennsylvania;

Whereas the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker), following a mobilization and de-

ployment to Kosovo in 2003, was placed on Federal active duty for a second overseas mobilization on September 19, 2008, and deployed to Iraq on January 15, 2009;

Whereas during the deployment of the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker) in Iraq, the brigade was primarily engaged in convoy security, force protection, provincial reconstruction, and base operations missions; and

Whereas the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker) returned to the United States and demobilized in September 2009, upon completion of one year of service in support of military operations in Iraq; Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses its gratitude to the members of the Army National Guard and Air National Guard of the State of Pennsylvania and their families for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States;

(2) commends the members of the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker) of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard on the completion of their most-recent deployment to Iraq; and

(3) recognizes the achievements of the members of the 56th Brigade Combat Team (Stryker), and all other formerly and presently deployed Pennsylvania Army National Guard and Air National Guard units and members, for their exemplary service.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have legislative 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. HOLDEN).

Mr. HOLDEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Washington for yielding me the time.

I rise in strong support of House Resolution 754, Mr. Speaker, to honor and say “thank you” to the members of the Pennsylvania National Guard from the 56th Stryker Brigade on their return home from Iraq and “a job well done.” And I want to commend and thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER) and all the members of the Pennsylvania delegation for being co-sponsors of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, during the deployment of the 56th Stryker Brigade, I had the opportunity to travel to Mississippi and Louisiana with Congressman SHUSTER, Congressman GERLACH and Congressman DENT, and then we had the opportunity, along with Congresswoman DAHLKEMPER, to travel over to Iraq to see our citizen-soldiers in action. And I can tell you that we, as members of the Pennsylvania delegation and the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, are very proud of our