

we have no sequester. As my good friend has indicated, it is a poor way of managing our budget.

Let me also say, because of the many low-income areas and the physicians that I have interacted with, who indicate how difficult it is to serve my low-income patients or my patients that are elderly, that the doctor fix is crucial for the 18th Congressional District in providing health care for those who are in need, particularly those who are elderly.

So, as we look askance at how this has been formulated—and I know that it is one that has come to us—but I would hope that we would do this fix this time, Mr. Speaker, and then work to undo the offset so that we can help seniors and doctors.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, so if the gentleman has no further speakers I will close.

I yield myself the balance of my time just really to drive home one point on the Armed Services' side of the equation, and that is the impact that personnel costs are having on the Department of Defense. They are an increasing, growing part of our defense budget in large part because we have been very, very generous with people who serve in the military in terms of pay, benefits, and retirement, but as everyone who serves on the Armed Services Committee knows, increasing personnel costs squeezes out other portions of the budget.

I have talked a lot about readiness. I think that is incredibly important, but also procurement, making sure that the men and women who serve in the military have the equipment that they need to fight the fight. We can have a great military where everyone is very well paid, the benefits go on forever, but they don't have the equipment or the training necessary to fight.

I will tell you, every single expert, right, left, middle, wherever, who studies this question, we just had four prominent think-tanks spanning that spectrum come out with a study on the future of the Department of Defense budget. Every single one of those experts has said that if we do nothing to rein in personnel costs, that is precisely the force that we will have; it will be hollow. It will not have the equipment, and it will not have the training to do what it is that we ask them to do.

Now, we may not think that the 1 percent cut that was done here in the COLA is the best way to go. I can entertain that argument. I certainly understand veterans who were promised this, who expect to receive it. If it is not that, what is it? What is on the table? All we have done in this Chamber is said no, no, no to every effort the Department of Defense has put out there to try to rein in this spending, to try to rein in this spending, as I said,

so that we can have a military that lives up to what we want it to live up to. This is a very, very real issue.

Once again, we are punting it and completely ignoring it, completely unaddressed by supporters of this bill. They are just addressing this narrow area, making the broader problem worse.

As I said in the beginning, also, once again, adding sequester back in the lexicon for another year. This is not a solution to any problem, other than a series of political ones. We have just too many difficult choices to make to simply rely on politics with every bill that we bring up here. We have got to make some hard choices. This bill doesn't do it. It punts once again in every conceivable way. It simply makes the problems worse.

I know it is not going to happen, but I would nonetheless urge this body to oppose this bill and make some responsible choices, actually make choices as to what to do with the budget instead of continually punting on every difficult decision that comes before us. I assure you, this will not be the last one by any stretch of the imagination.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is always responsible to keep promises made to our Nation's veterans. What is before the House today is an extension of current policy that was passed in overwhelming bipartisan fashion right here in this Chamber less than 2 months ago.

In addition, it does protect the promises that the Nation has made to our veterans. So, I encourage my colleagues to vote in favor of the bill, to care for those who have borne the battle, and to send that message to all who can hear it.

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, due to heavy snow in Oregon, and the associated cancellation of flights out of the State, I am unable to be present for the vote on S. 25. I plan to vote in favor of S. 25. I voted against the Murray-Ryan Budget that put in place the unacceptable cuts to military retirement cost of living adjustments (COLAs). These cuts would have reduced annual COLA for military retirees by 1 percent every year until the service member turns 62. This could be as much as an \$83,000 cut over the lifetime of a typical enlisted member who retires after 20 years of service. It is unconscionable that Congress would try to balance the budget on the backs of our military retirees, and I am glad that S. 25 prevents COLA cuts from going into place for all current military retirees and future retirees who are currently serving.

I am also pleased that S. 25 sets aside some funding for preventing Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) cuts to Medicare and TRICARE reimbursements for doctors. I voted against the creation of the faulty SGR formula in 1997 and have fought to fix it ever since. Unfortunately, instead of fixing the SGR Congress has delayed it year after year. This

means that if Congress fails to act by March of this year, doctors would face a cut of approximately 20% in their Medicare and TRICARE reimbursements. This is not acceptable. I am hopeful that Congress will use the funds set aside by S. 25 to help pay for a permanent fix to the SGR rather than another delay.

Mr. BRALEY of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, while I support the effort to fix the cut to veterans' pensions included in S. 25, I am staunchly opposed to extending sequestration cuts to Medicare. Given that the cut to veterans' pensions is due to occur many years before the sequestration extension, I am supporting this bill, with the hope that Congress will undo this additional extension of sequestration cuts to Medicare. Again, let me state clearly: I oppose extending sequestration cuts to Medicare, and I will be working to convince the Senate to find an alternative way to fund the fix to veterans' pensions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 25, 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. FITZPATRICK. 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, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, proceedings will resume on questions previously postponed.

Votes will be taken in the following order:

Ordering the previous question on House Resolution 475;

Adopting House Resolution 475, if ordered; and

Suspending the rules and passing S. 25.

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

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3193, CONSUMER FINANCIAL FREEDOM AND WASHINGTON ACCOUNTABILITY ACT; PROVIDING FOR PROCEEDINGS DURING THE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 13, 2014, THROUGH FEBRUARY 24, 2014; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on ordering the previous question on the resolution (H. Res. 475) providing for consideration of the bill (3193) to amend the Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010 to strengthen the review authority of the Financial Stability Oversight Council of regulations issued by