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House of Representatives

The House met at noon and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HARRIS).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
February 25, 2014.

I hereby appoint the Honorable ANDY HARRIS to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2014, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 1:50 p.m.

UMITA AND UMRA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about H.R. 899, the Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act, which will be considered by the House later this week. I realize, Mr. Speaker, that this name doesn't come trippingly off the tongue, but it is an important piece of legislation.

Every year, Federal agencies impose thousands of regulatory mandates on local governments and small businesses. Those mandates are often costly, stretching city and State budgets and making it harder for businesses in North Carolina and around the country to grow and add jobs.

UMITA will force Washington to think much more carefully about regulatory costs before passing them on to small businesses and local governments. This bill will ensure that regulations are enacted only when the benefits to be gleaned by a rule outweigh the costs imposed by the rule.

Ultimately, this bill is about transparency and accountability, something Democrats and Republicans can support with equal fervor.

Mr. Speaker, I began the process of writing this legislation in 2007. Knowing that it takes a lot of creativity and hard work to pass legislation, I sat down with my staff to think about legislative ideas that could gain sufficient bipartisan support to be enacted.

We started looking at the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995, which cleared a Republican Congress before being signed by President Clinton. UMRA was a model for bipartisan legislating, so we looked to it for ideas.

The guiding principle of UMRA was that the American people would be better served by a government that regulates only on the basis of good information, including a cost-benefit analysis. UMRA was a good bill, but over time, shortcomings have become apparent. Multiple administrations over the past 19 years have attempted to fix loopholes in UMRA via executive actions.

Additionally, independent regulatory agencies have become far more prevalent in the intervening years, so it is very important to make sure they are bound by the same transparency requirements as other regulatory bodies.

To address these issues, we drafted the Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act. UMITA will codify these executive fixes and fix some currently unaddressed loopholes to make sure that Federal agencies are in compliance with the spirit of UMRA.

Mr. Speaker, like UMRA, UMITA is bipartisan legislation. Three out of four cosponsors are Democrats. This bill has gained bipartisan support because it is purely about good government, fostering openness and honesty about the cost of regulations. Specifically, UMITA will require government's independent regulatory agencies to analyze the cost of their proposed mandates before they are imposed on the public; treat ''changes to conditions of grant aid'' as mandates, guarantee the public always has the opportunity to weigh in on regulations; and equip Congress and the American people with better tools to determine the true cost of regulations.

Finally, H.R. 899 will ensure government is held accountable for following these rules. If the requirements set for by UMRA and UMITA are not met, a judicial stay may be placed upon regulations.

UMITA is a bipartisan solution to a bipartisan problem: unaccountable Federal agencies damaging our economy with poorly considered regulations.

I look forward to broad support from my colleagues from both sides of the aisle when it is considered on Friday.

REMINGTON TO ALABAMA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, last week the Tennessee Valley of north Alabama enjoyed a great economic victory when Remington Outdoor Company announced 2,000 new

Printed on recycled paper.

jobs and a new firearms manufacturing plant in the valley.

Last month, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo declared that hardworking Americans who believe in the Second Amendment's right to bear arms ''have no place in the State of New York because that's not who New Yorkers are.''

No question, Alabama and the Tennessee Valley owe a debt of gratitude to New York and its Governor Cuomo for helping to inspire Remington to expand in Alabama, but to be fair, New York's hostility to the Second Amendment is only one factor supporting Remington's Alabama expansion. The most important factor is that Alabama is simply a better place to do business.

New York's income tax rates are roughly 60 percent higher than Alabama's, which means Alabama's hardworking citizens keep more of the money they earn.

New York's per capita property tax rates are roughly four times higher than those in Alabama, which means Huntsville metro citizens are twice as likely to own a home as New Yorkers.

New York's business tax burden is the 50th worst in America, while Alabama's is a respectable 21st.

New York residents are 25 percent more likely to live in poverty than Huntsville metro citizens. Out of 50 States, Alabama's long-term solvency is 5th best in America, and its overall fiscal condition is 10th best. New York's financial condition is near the bottom, ranking 45th in each category.

Alabama's financial future is bright. New York increasingly risks being unable to pay for basic services.

New York workers average commuting 78 minutes a day to and from work versus 36 minutes a day for Huntsville metro citizens. Tennessee Valley citizens have more time to spend with their families and the enjoyment of life.

In Alabama, the cost of living is 11 percent below the national average. In New York, the cost of living is 25 percent above the national average. A paycheck in Alabama buys 40 percent more than the same paycheck in New York.

Alabama's right-to-work law means that Alabamians cannot be forced to join a union against their will. Whether it be our right-to-work law or the Second Amendment right to bear arms, Alabama's motto says it all: ''We dare defend our rights.''

Beating out New York was only half the battle for Remington's plant. Alabama faced stiff competition from 24 other States; yet, in the judgment of Remington, the Tennessee Valley was the best place to live, work, and grow their business.

Why? The Tennessee Valley is highly educated. For example, Huntsville metro has the highest per capita concentration of engineers in America. Huntsville and Madison County are ranked number seven in America by CNN Money as ''a great place to live and find a job,'' number four in America by the Progressive Policy Institute on the list of America's high-tech hot spots, in the top 10 in America by USA Today as a great place to be inspired by innovation, number three in America by business facilities for aerospace and defense manufacturing, and in the top 10 in America by Family Circle magazine for being a great place to raise a family.

The Tennessee Valley is blessed with a clean environment and four major lakes with world-renowned fishing and water sports, lakes that stretch the entire length of the Tennessee Valley.

Unlike New York and other blue States, in Alabama, envy, greed, and class warfare are not political weapons that justify attacking, taxing, and destroying success. To the contrary, in Alabama, we applaud those who, through hard work, find prosperity and the American Dream.

In Alabama, we are blessed with a great Governor in Robert Bentley. We are blessed with political leaders in Jackson, Marshall, Madison, Limestone, Morgan, Lawrence, Colbert, and Lauderdale Counties who support free enterprise and are cooperative and willing to help each other achieve success, attributes that were critical to Remington's concluding that the Tennessee Valley was the best place in America for Remington to grow and prosper.

Thanks to Remington, Americans will soon be able to exercise their Second Amendment rights by buying and owning firearms made in the great State of Alabama.

Thank you, Remington.

As for all you other businesses in blue States who are tired of being attacked and regulated and taxed into submission and financial loss, come on down. There is a reason why Remington chose Alabama and a reason why we are called ''Alabama, the Beautiful.''

Try Alabama. I promise you will like it and wonder why you didn't come sooner.

ROBERT NEWTON LOWRY, A TRUE AMERICAN HERO

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. DENHAM) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge and honor the life of a true American hero, Robert Newton Lowry, on his 95th birthday. Bob was born on this day, February 25, 1919, 95 years ago, here in Washington, D.C. He considers Modesto, California, his home.

For high school, Mr. Lowry attended Manlius School, a military school in upstate New York. He graduated at the top of his class and was named an ROTC honor grad. Bob also received a commission to the United States Army, but, unfortunately, he was too young to accept it at the time.

He then was admitted to Princeton University. During his time there, he received the prestigious New York Herald Book Award. He graduated in 1942 with highest honors, summa cum laude and ROTC. These honors earned him another commission, this time to the United States Marine Corps as a second lieutenant. In July 1942, following Officer Candidate School at Quantico, he began artillery training.

In February of 1943, Bob sailed out of San Diego Harbor with the 2nd Battalion, 12th Regiment of the Third Marine Division. He joined the fighting in the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, first in Guadalcanal, then the original invasions of Bougainville, Guam, and Iwo Jima.

During his time in Auckland, New Zealand, Bob met his wife, Lieutenant Commander Mary Dudley. They married in May of 1946. Mary died in April 2005, just 2 weeks before their 60th anniversary. Mary always maintained that, as lieutenant commander, she outranked him both in the military service and in their marriage. They are survived by two children, Robert Dudley Lowry and Ann Lowry-Perez, as well as four grandchildren: Sam and Joe Lowry, and Michael and Lowry Champion.

After the battle of Iwo Jima, Bob returned stateside to Norfolk, Virginia, where he commanded a Marine guard company at the naval station. He was soon appointed commanding officer of the Europa, a 100-man Marine detachment sent to Europe to provide security for a seized German luxury liner. Bob was one of the few Marine Corps officers to manage the commissioning of this kind of Navy vessel.

Bob was released from Active Duty in January 1946 and retired from the Marines in 1959 with the rank of major. Following his time in the Marines, he enrolled in law school at the University of Virginia in a postwar accelerated program, graduating in 1948.

Bob then began a lifetime of specialty law practice, primarily in public utility and transportation. His career started first with the Southern Railway and then progressed to his work at a law firm in Washington, D.C.

In 1953, Bob accepted a position with Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison, a renowned law firm in San Francisco, from which he retired in 1989. He has greatly enjoyed the company of the Marine Corps League, the Modesto Detachment, whose members regularly go out of their way to include him, to celebrate his service, as well as they are doing his 95th birthday celebration.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring Robert Newton Lowry on his unwavering dedication and contributions to this great Nation.

□ 1215

THE DIVINE NINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, as we observe the final week of Black

History Month, I would like to recognize the Divine Nine historically Black fraternities and sororities of the National Pan-Hellenic Council.

For over 100 years, brothers and sisters of the Divine Nine have played an instrumental role in altering the course of American history, and the Divine Nine have served as training grounds for some of our Nation's best and brightest leaders.

The Divine Nine Organizations are:

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, founded in 1986 at Cornell University. Their brotherhood includes the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Congressmen EMANUEL CLEAVER, DANNY DAVIS, CHAKA FATTAH, AL GREEN, GREGORY MEEKS, CHARLES RANGEL, DAVID SCOTT, and BOBBY SCOTT; Ambassador Andrew Jackson Young; the National Urban League president, Marc Morial; legal pioneers Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall; and their honorable grand president, Mark S. Tillman.

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, founded in 1908 at Howard University. Their sisterhood proudly boasts Congresswomen SHEILA JACKSON LEE, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, TERRI SEWELL, and FREDERICA WILSON; actress Phylicia Rashad of ''The Cosby Show''; author Maya Angelou; civil rights leaders Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King; and their honorable president attorney, Carolyn House Stuart.

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, founded in 1911 at Indiana University. Among their notable achievers are Microsoft chairman and CEO, John W. Thompson; civil rights leader the Reverend Ralph Abernathy; founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Reverend Delegate Walter Fauntroy; Congressmen SANFORD BISHOP, WILLIAM LACY CLAY, JOHN CONYERS, ALCEE HASTINGS, BENNIE THOMPSON, and HAKEEM JEFFRIES; and Grand Polemarch William ''Randy'' Bates.

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, founded in 1911 at Howard University. They include in their ranks Assistant House Democratic Leader JAMES CLYBURN of South Carolina; Congressman HANK JOHNSON of Georgia; NASA Administrator Charles Bolden; comedian Bill Cosby; Dr. Charles Drew, whose medical research in the field of blood transfusions led to the founding of the blood bank; and their honorable grand basileus, Dr. Andrew Ray.

Delta Sigma Theta, founded in 1913 at Howard University. Delta counts as sisters my esteemed colleague and chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Honorable MARCIA L. FUDGE; also Congresswomen YVETTE CLARKE and JOYCE BEATTY; Shirley Chisolm, the first African American woman elected to Congress; former Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman; and their honorable president, Paulette C. Walker.

Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, founded in 1914 at Howard University. Not only are the Sigmas the fraternity of my husband, Dr. Nathaniel Horn, they also include former President of the United States William Jefferson Clinton; Congressman JOHN LEWIS; A. Phillip Randolph, civil rights pioneer and leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; Dr. George Washington Carver; and their Honorable President, Jonathan Mason.

Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, founded in 1920 at Howard University. Notable sisters include author Zora Neale Hurston; jazz great Sarah Vaughan; the late Congresswoman Julia Carson; and their honorable president, Mary Breaux Wright.

Sigma Gamma Rho, my sorority, founded in 1922 at Butler University. The sisters of Sigma Gamma Rho include Congresswoman CORRINE BROWN of Florida and the late Congresswoman Lindy Boggs; the first African American winner of an Academy Award, Hattie McDaniel; and our esteemed grand basileus, Bonita Herring.

Finally, Iota Phi Theta, founded in 1963 at Morgan State University. Their notables include Congressman BOBBY RUSH; Billy Ocasio, former alderman to Chicago's 26th Ward and current adviser to Governor Pat Quinn; and their honorable grand polaris, Robert Clark.

Whether it has been standing up for women's suffrage, advancing civil rights by dismantling Jim Crow, advancing the science of medicine, or leading in business innovation, the Divine Nine has been there the entire time leading from the front.

The Divine Nine's scope of service is felt far beyond their organizational borders. The work of these fraternities and sororities has helped to make this Nation a better place for all Americans. For this, and many other reasons, I thank the entire Divine Nine for a job well done.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 19 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer:

Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day.

As we meditate on all the blessings of life, we especially pray for the blessing of peace in our lives and in our world. Our fervent prayer, O God, is that people will learn to live together in reconciliation and respect, so that the terrors of war and of dictatorial abuse will be no more.

In a special way, we ask Your blessing upon the people of Ukraine. May peace and civility descend upon that nation as it finds itself in political turmoil.

May Your special blessings be upon the Members of this assembly as they return from a week in their home districts. Give them wisdom and charity, that they might work together for the common good.

May all that is done this day in the people's House be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

> I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH RATE FORMULA

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, in just a little bit over a month's time, the Nation's physicians will face a 25 percent reduction in payment in the Medicare system. This severely affects access for Medicare patients and is something that could be resolved.

Two weeks ago, for the first time, introduced in the House, H.R. 4015 was a compromise agreement between Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate, on a way forward for repealing the sustainable growth rate formula.

It does represent a compromise and is not going to please everyone, but it is a significant achievement and was marked by an editorial piece in The Wall Street Journal on February 19 titled ''Fixing the 'Doc Fix.' ''

In the Journal's editorial, they note that the Senate Finance, House Ways and Means, and Energy and Commerce Committees don't agree on much, but they are doing a service by agreeing to end this charade known as the SGR.

They go on to note that ''doctors hate the uncertainty of the SGR.'' That is an understatement. Every Member of this House has heard from their physicians back home about how much they hate this formula.

They go on to say, ''Absent reform, one way or another the money is going

to be spent, and Congress can either continue to do so in incremental doc-fix slices or admit in advance that it was always going to do it.''

In fact, the time has come. It is within our power. We should repeal the SGR and pass H.R. 4015.

APPLAUDING THE MORAL MONDAY PROTESTS

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

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, on February 8, more than 80,000 North Carolinians rallied outside the State capitol building in Raleigh to protest the extreme policies of North California Republican Governor Pat McCrory and the Republican-led legislature.

North Carolina Republicans have cut education funding to the bone, denied a half-million people access to health care by refusing to expand Medicaid, and are trying to silence North Carolina citizens by making it harder to vote.

Mr. Speaker, these policies are making life difficult, and North Carolinians have had enough. North Carolina Republican leaders must not continue to sacrifice the common good of millions to benefit an elite few.

We need to increase funding for education and job training, expand health care access, and guarantee the right to vote.

I applaud the Moral Monday protests and all those who support a better way to govern.

HONORING DR. NEHEMIAH DAVIS' 50TH ANNIVERSARY AS PASTOR OF MOUNT PISGAH MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

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

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Reverend Nehemiah Davis on his 50th anniversary as pastor of the historic Mount Pisgah Baptist Church. The church is in my hometown of Fort Worth, Texas, located on Evans Avenue, on the historical South Side.

While this year marks Dr. Davis' 50th year as pastor of Mount Pisgah, I would also like to congratulate him on his installation as president of the National Missionary Baptist Convention of America.

Pastor Davis' dedication to the church and to his community is exceeded only by his devotion to his wife, Dorothy Nell Cole Davis, and his two daughters, Carol Michelle Davis Jackson and Nina Caron Davis, who have given Dr. Davis two grandkids.

Mr. Speaker, Pastor Davis has lived his entire life giving service to the community and preaching the faith, and he wanted everyone here to know today that out of all the things that he has accomplished over his lifetime, that he is also very proud of his domino-playing skills.

I ask my distinguished colleagues of the 113th Congress to join me in honoring Pastor Davis on his 50th anniversary as pastor of Mount Pisgah Missionary Baptist Church, as well as an exemplary life of service.

CONDITIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, this picture depicts South Sudanese women in a food distribution line. Another desperate woman at the fore is hunched over barbed wire.

Violence, displacement, and starvation plague the world's newest nation, but that doesn't have to be so.

Months ago, I wrote the Obama administration urging that they invite former President George W. Bush and the Bush Institute to engage in the crisis, given that President Bush had forged lasting relationships with South Sudanese leaders during the negotiation of peace in 2005.

The Obama administration, perhaps constrained by pride, has failed to act, and the very nation the U.S. helped birth is perishing in its infancy.

TROOP REDUCTION THREATENS NATIONAL SECURITY

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel outlined a proposal yesterday calling for a troop reduction that will shrink our Army to its smallest size since World War II began in 1939.

This decision is sad proof that the President's priorities will threaten the strength of our military at a time of worldwide instability as al Qaeda and its affiliates develop safe havens across North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia with an intent to destroy America.

This past week, I participated in a delegation led by Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman ED ROYCE to Asia. In Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines, we met national leaders who are building their militaries to face the rising threats and promoting peace through strength.

Efficiencies must be made to maintain our end strength. The President has misplaced priorities and chosen to place our brave men and women in uniform on the chopping block in order to spend more money promoting Big Government dependency. National defense is the first duty of the national government, as promoted by the Military Officers Association of America.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September the 11th in the global war on terrorism.

LET'S MAKE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT LEANER, MORE EFFICIENT, AND MORE ACCOUNTABLE

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

Mr. YODER. Mr. Speaker, during our most recent constituent listening tour, I had the opportunity to speak with over 1,000 Kansans, many who continue to voice their frustration with a Federal Government that seems to create more problems than it fixes and builds too many barriers to success for those working to realize the American Dream.

Mr. Speaker, the House must continue to pass legislation that helps regular, average, working American people. Despite the entrenched Washington interests, we must remove the Big Government barriers that are slowing the drive and ingenuity of our great Nation.

We must pursue a robust, all-of-the-above energy policy that increases domestic energy production, making us less dependent on foreign sources of energy, keeping energy prices down for American families, and putting tens of thousands of Americans back to work.

We must reform the Tax Code that is riddled with exemptions and loopholes and is unfair to the average American worker. We must put forward patient-centered reforms to our health care system that spur competition, quality of care innovation, and cost reduction.

Mr. Speaker, we must make our Federal Government leaner, more efficient, and more accountable to the American people.

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO CUBA AND OF THE EMERGENCY AUTHORITY RELATING TO THE REGULATION OF THE ANCHORAGE AND MOVEMENT OF VESSELS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 113–92)

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DENHAM) laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency declared on March 1, 1996, with respect to the Government

of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2014.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *February 25, 2014*.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 13 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1502

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee) at 3 o'clock and 2 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

FOIA OVERSIGHT AND IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 2014

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1211) to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Freedom of Information Act), to provide for greater public access to information, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1211

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 ''FOIA Oversight and Implementation Act of 2014'' or the ''FOIA Act''.

SEC. 2. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT AMENDMENTS.

(a) ELECTRONIC ACCESSIBILITY.—Section 552 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by striking ''for public inspection and copying'' and inserting ''in an electronic, publicly accessible format'' each place it appears;

(ii) by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon;

(iii) by striking subparagraph (E) and inserting the following new subparagraphs:

''(E) copies of all releasable records, regardless of form or format, that have been requested three or more times under paragraph (3); and

''(F) a general index of the records referred to under subparagraphs (D) and (E);''; and

(iv) in the matter following subparagraph (F) (as added by clause (ii) of this subparagraph)—

(I) by striking ''subparagraph (D)'' and inserting ''subparagraphs (D) and (E)''; and

(II) by striking ''subparagraph (E)'' and inserting ''subparagraph (F)''; and

(B) in paragraph (7)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''that will take longer than ten days to process''; and

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by inserting ''automated'' after ''provides'';

(2) in subsection (g), by striking ''make publicly available upon request'' and inserting ''make available in an electronic, publicly accessible format''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(m) FOIA WEB SITE REQUIRED.—Not later than one year after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Office of Management and Budget shall ensure the existence and operation of a single website, accessible by the public at no cost to access, that allows the public to—

''(1) submit requests for records under subsection (a)(3);

''(2) receive automated information about the status of a request under subsection (a)(7); and

''(3) file appeals.''.

(b) PRESUMPTION OF OPENNESS.—Section 552(b) of title 5, United States Code, is amended in the matter following paragraph (9), by inserting before ''Any reasonably segregable portion'' the following: ''An agency may not withhold information under this subsection unless such agency reasonably foresees that disclosure would cause specific identifiable harm to an interest protected by an exemption, or if disclosure is prohibited by law.''.

(c) THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES.—Section 552 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(4)(A)(i), by striking ''the Director of the Office of Management and Budget'' and inserting ''the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Government Information Services,''; and

(2) by amending subsection (h) to read as follows:

''(h) THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES.—

''(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Office of Government Information Services within the National Archives and Records Administration. The head of the Office is the Director of the Office of Government Information Services.

''(2) REVIEW OF FOIA POLICY, PROCEDURE, AND COMPLIANCE.—The Office of Government Information Services shall—

''(A) review policies and procedures of agencies under this section;

''(B) review compliance with this section by agencies;

''(C) identify methods that improve compliance under this section that may include—

''(i) the timely processing of requests submitted to agencies under this section;

''(ii) the system for assessing fees and fee waivers under this section; and

''(iii) the use of any exemption under subsection (b); and

''(D) review and provide guidance to agencies on the use of fees and fee waivers.

''(3) MEDIATION SERVICES.—The Office of Government Information Services shall offer mediation services to resolve disputes between persons making requests under this section and agencies as a non-exclusive alternative to litigation and, at the discretion of the Office, may issue advisory opinions if mediation has not resolved the dispute.

''(4) SUBMISSION OF REPORT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Office of Government Information Services shall not less than annually submit to the committees described in subparagraph (C) and the President a report on the findings from the information reviewed and identified under paragraph (2), a summary of the Office's activities under paragraph (3) (including any advisory opinions issued), and legislative and regulatory recommendations to improve the administration of this section.

''(B) ELECTRONIC AVAILABILITY OF REPORTS.—The Office shall make available any report submitted under paragraph (A) in a publicly accessible format.

''(C) CONGRESSIONAL SUBMISSION OF REPORT.—The committees described in this subparagraph are the following:

''(i) The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives.

''(ii) The Committees on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Judiciary of the Senate.

''(D) DIRECT SUBMISSION OF REPORTS AND TESTIMONY.—Any report submitted under paragraph (A), any testimony, or any other communication to Congress shall be submitted directly to the committees and the President, without any requirement that any officer or employee outside of the Office of Government Information Services, including the Archivist of the United States and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, review such report, testimony, or other communication.

''(5) SUBMISSION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.—The Director of the Office of Government Information Services may submit additional information to Congress and the President that the Director determines to be appropriate.

''(6) ANNUAL MEETING REQUIRED.—Not less than once a year, the Office of Government Information Services shall hold a meeting that is open to the public on the review and reports by the Office and permit interested persons to appear and present oral or written statements at such meeting.''.

(d) PUBLIC RESOURCES.—Section 552(a)(6)(A) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking ''of such determination and the reasons therefor, and of the right of such person to appeal to the head of the agency any adverse determination; and'' and inserting the following: ''of—

''(I) such determination and the reasons therefor;

''(II) the right of such person to seek assistance from the agency FOIA Public Liaison; and

''(III) the right of such person to appeal to the head of the agency any adverse determination, within a period determined by the agency that is not less than 90 days after the receipt of such adverse determination; and''; and

(2) in clause (ii), by striking the period and inserting the following: ''and the right of such person to seek dispute resolution services from the agency FOIA Public Liaison or the Office of Government Information Services.''

(e) ADDITIONAL DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS.—Section 552(a) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

''(8) DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION FOR INCREASED PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOVERNMENT.—Each agency shall—

''(A) review the records of such agency to determine whether the release of the records would be in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public

understanding of the operations or activities of the Government;

''(B) for records determined to be in the public interest under subparagraph (A), reasonably segregate and redact any information exempted from disclosure under subsection (b); and

''(C) make available in an electronic, publicly accessible format, any records identified in subparagraph (A), as modified pursuant to subparagraph (B).

''(9) INCREASED DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.—Each agency shall—

''(A) make information public to the greatest extent possible through modern technology to—

''(i) inform the public of the operations and activities of the Government; and

''(ii) ensure timely disclosure of information; and

''(B) establish procedures for identifying categories of records that may be disclosed regularly and additional records of interest to the public that are appropriate for public disclosure, and for posting such records in an electronic, publicly accessible format.''.

(f) REPORT ON CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION FOR DISCLOSURE.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every two years thereafter, the Director of the Office of Information Policy of the Department of Justice, after consultation with agencies selected by the Director, shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committees on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Judiciary of the Senate a report that identifies categories of records that would be appropriate for proactive disclosure, and shall make such report available in an electronic, publicly accessible format.

(g) AGENCY FOIA REPORT.—Section 552(e) of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by inserting ''and to the Director of the Office of Government Information Services'' after ''the Attorney General of the United States'';

(B) in subparagraph (N), by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon;

(C) in subparagraph (O), by striking the period and inserting a semicolon; and

(D) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

''(P) the number of times the agency invoked a law enforcement exclusion under subsection (c);

''(Q) the number of times the agency engaged in dispute resolution with the assistance of the Office of Government Information Services or the FOIA Public Liaison;

''(R) the number of records that were made available in an electronic, publicly accessible format under subsection (a)(2); and

''(S) the number of times the agency assessed a search or duplication fee under subsection (a)(4)(A) and did not comply with a time limit under subsection (a)(6).'';

(2) by amending paragraph (3) to read as follows:

''(3) ELECTRONIC ACCESSIBILITY OF REPORTS.—Each agency shall make each such report available in an electronic, publicly accessible format. In addition, each agency shall make the raw statistical data used in its reports available in a timely manner in an electronic, publicly accessible format. Such data shall be—

''(A) made available without charge, license, or registration requirement;

''(B) capable of being searched and aggregated; and

''(C) permitted to be downloaded and downloaded in bulk.'';

(3) in paragraph (4)—

(A) by striking ''Committee on Government Reform and Oversight'' and inserting ''Committee on Oversight and Government Reform'';

(B) by striking ''Governmental Affairs'' and inserting ''Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs''; and

(C) by striking ''April 1'' and inserting ''March 1'';

(4) in paragraph (5)—

(A) by inserting ''and the Director of the Office of Government Information Services'' after ''the Director of the Office of Management and Budget''; and

(B) by striking ''by October 1, 1997''; and

(5) by amending paragraph (6) to read as follows:

''(6) ATTORNEY GENERAL FOIA REPORT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General of the United States shall submit to Congress and the President an annual report on or before March 1 of each calendar year which shall include for the prior calendar year—

''(i) a listing of the number of cases arising under this section;

''(ii) each subsection under this section, each paragraph of the subsection, and any exemption, if applicable, involved in each case, the disposition of such case, and the cost, fees, and penalties assessed under subparagraphs (E), (F), and (G) of subsection (a)(4); and

''(iii) a description of the efforts undertaken by the Department of Justice to encourage agency compliance with this section.

''(B) ELECTRONIC AVAILABILITY.—The Attorney General of the United States—

''(i) shall make each report described under subparagraph (A) available in an electronic, publicly accessible format; and

''(ii) shall make the raw statistical data used in each report available in an electronic, publicly accessible format, which shall be—

''(I) made available without charge, license, or registration requirement;

''(II) capable of being searched and aggregated; and

''(III) permitted to be downloaded, including downloaded in bulk.''.

(h) SEARCH OR DUPLICATION FEES.—Section 552(a)(4)(A)(viii) of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: ''Any agency that does assess search or duplication fees after failing to comply with a time limit under paragraph (6) shall provide written notice to the requester of the circumstance that justifies the fees. If an agency fails to provide such notice, the agency may not assess search or duplication fees.''.

(i) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE.—Subsection (i) of section 552 of title 5, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(i) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE.—The Government Accountability Office shall—

''(1) conduct audits of administrative agencies on compliance with and implementation of the requirements of this section and issue reports detailing the results of such audits;

''(2) catalog the number of exemptions under subsection (b)(3) and agency use of such exemptions; and

''(3) review and prepare a report on the processing of requests by agencies for information pertaining to an entity that has received assistance under title I of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (12 U.S.C. 5211 et seq.) during any period in which the Government owns or owned more than 50 percent of the stock of such entity.''.

(j) CHIEF FOIA OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES; COUNCIL; REVIEW.—Section 552 of title 5, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking subsections (j) and (k); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (i), the following new subsections:

''(j) CHIEF FOIA OFFICER.—

''(1) DESIGNATION.—Each agency shall designate a Chief FOIA Officer who shall be a senior official of such agency (at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level).

''(2) DUTIES.—The Chief FOIA Officer of each agency shall, subject to the authority of the head of the agency—

''(A) have agency-wide responsibility for efficient and appropriate compliance with this section;

''(B) monitor implementation of this section throughout the agency and keep the head of the agency, the chief legal officer of the agency, and the Attorney General appropriately informed of the agency's performance in implementing this section;

''(C) recommend to the head of the agency such adjustments to agency practices, policies, personnel, and funding as may be necessary to improve its implementation of this section;

''(D) review and report to the Attorney General, through the head of the agency, at such times and in such formats as the Attorney General may direct, on the agency's performance in implementing this section;

''(E) facilitate public understanding of the purposes of the statutory exemptions of this section by including concise descriptions of the exemptions in both the agency's handbook issued under subsection (g), and the agency's annual report on this section, and by providing an overview, where appropriate, of certain general categories of agency records to which those exemptions apply;

''(F) serve as the primary agency liaison with the Office of Government Information Services and the Office of Information Policy; and

''(G) designate one or more FOIA Public Liaisons.

''(3) COMPLIANCE REVIEW REQUIRED.—The Chief FOIA Officer of each agency shall—

''(A) review, not less than annually, all aspects of the agency's administration of this section to ensure compliance with the requirements of this section, including—

''(i) agency regulations;

''(ii) disclosure of records required under paragraphs (2), (8), and (9) of subsection (a);

''(iii) assessment of fees and determination of eligibility for fee waivers;

''(iv) the timely processing of requests for information under this section;

''(v) the use of exemptions under subsection (b); and

''(vi) dispute resolution services with the assistance of the Office of Government Information Services or the FOIA Public Liaison; and

''(B) make recommendations as necessary to improve agency practices and compliance with this section.

''(k) CHIEF FOIA OFFICERS COUNCIL.—

''(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the executive branch the Chief FOIA Officers Council (in this subsection, referred to as the 'Council').

''(2) MEMBERS.—The Council shall consist of the following members:

''(A) The Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget.

''(B) The Director of the Office of Information Policy at the Department of Justice.

''(C) The Director of the Office of Government Information Services at the National Archives and Records Administration.

''(D) The Chief FOIA Officer of each agency.

''(E) Any other officer or employee of the United States as designated by the Co-Chairs.

''(3) CO-CHAIRS.—The Director of the Office of Information Policy at the Department of Justice and the Director of the Office of Government Information Services at the National Archives and Records Administration shall be the Co-Chairs of the Council.

''(4) SUPPORT SERVICES.—The Administrator of General Services shall provide administrative and other support for the Council.

''(5) CONSULTATION.—In performing its duties, the Council shall consult regularly with members of the public who make requests under this section.

''(6) DUTIES.—The duties of the Council include the following:

''(A) Develop recommendations for increasing compliance and efficiency under this section.

''(B) Disseminate information about agency experiences, ideas, best practices, and innovative approaches related to this section.

''(C) Identify, develop, and coordinate initiatives to increase transparency and compliance with this section.

''(D) Promote the development and use of common performance measures for agency compliance with this section.

''(7) MEETINGS.—

''(A) REGULAR MEETINGS.—The Council shall meet regularly and such meetings shall be open to the public unless the Council determines to close the meeting for reasons of national security or to discuss information exempt under subsection (b).

''(B) ANNUAL MEETINGS.—Not less than once a year, the Council shall hold a meeting that shall be open to the public and permit interested persons to appear and present oral and written statements to the Council.

''(C) NOTICE.—Not later than 10 business days before a meeting of the Council, notice of such meeting shall be published in the Federal Register.

''(D) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF COUNCIL RECORDS.—Except as provided in subsection (b), the records, reports, transcripts, minutes, appendixes, working papers, drafts, studies, agenda, or other documents that were made available to or prepared for or by the Council shall be made publicly available.

''(E) MINUTES.—Detailed minutes of each meeting of the Council shall be kept and shall contain a record of the persons present, a complete and accurate description of matters discussed and conclusions reached, and copies of all reports received, issued, or approved by the Council.''.

(k) REGULATIONS.—

(1) REVISION OF REGULATIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each agency shall review the regulations of such agency and shall issue regulations on procedures for the disclosure of records under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, in accordance with the amendments made by this section. The regulations of each agency shall include—

(A) procedures for engaging in dispute resolution; and

(B) procedures for engaging with the Office of Government Information Services.

(2) OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES REPORT.—Not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Office of Government Information Services shall submit to Congress a report on agency compliance with the requirements of this subsection.

(3) REPORT ON NONCOMPLIANCE.—The head of any agency that does not meet the requirements of paragraph (1) shall submit to Congress a report on the reason for noncompliance not later than 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(4) INSPECTOR GENERAL REVIEW FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.—Any agency that fails to comply with the requirements of this subsection shall be reviewed by the Office of Inspector General of such agency for compliance with section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

(5) AGENCY DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''agency'' has the meaning given such term in section 552(f) of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall establish a pilot program for 3 years to review the benefits of a centralized portal to process requests and release information under section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Freedom of Information Act).

(b) PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall establish a plan to evaluate the functionality and benefits of a centralized portal to receive and track requests made under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, by selecting no less than 3 agencies that have not previously participated in a centralized portal, including at least one of the following:

(1) An agency that receives more than 30,000 requests annually for information under section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

(2) An agency that receives between 15,000 and 30,000 requests annually for information under such section.

(3) An agency that receives 15,000 or fewer requests annually for information under such section.

(c) AGENCY USE OF WEB SITE.—Each agency selected under subsection (b) shall use the centralized portal to—

(1) receive requests under section 552 of title 5, United States Code;

(2) consult with and refer requests to participating agencies;

(3) if practicable, process requests received under such section;

(4) track the status of requests submitted under such section; and

(5) make records released available publicly through the centralized portal.

(d) REVIEW REQUIRED.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall, in consultation with the Attorney General, the Office of Government Information Services, and the head of each agency participating in the pilot program, review the benefits of a centralized portal, including—

(1) any cost saving, resource saving, or efficiency gained;

(2) any change in the amount of requests received under section 552 of title 5, United States Code;

(3) any increase in transparency and accessibility to Government information; and

(4) any changes in the ability to access and compile information needed for agency annual reports required under section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

(e) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 3 months after the completion of the pilot program, the head of each agency participating in the program—

(1) shall submit to Congress a report on the impact of the pilot program on agency processes under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, whether the agency will continue to participate in the centralized portal, and any recommendations the head of the agency considers appropriate; and

(2) shall make such report available in an electronic, publicly accessible format.

(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AGENCY.—The term ''agency'' has the meaning given such term in section 552(f) of title 5, United States Code.

(2) CENTRALIZED PORTAL.—The term ''centralized portal'' means an electronic online portal that allows a requester to submit a request under section 552 of title 5, United States Code, to any participating agency, to track the status of a request, and to obtain a response to a request made through the portal.

SEC. 4. INSPECTOR GENERAL REVIEW; ADVERSE ACTIONS.

(a) INSPECTOR GENERAL REVIEW.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Inspector General of each agency shall—

(A) periodically review compliance with the requirements of section 552 of title 5, United States Code, including the timely processing of requests, assessment of fees and fee waivers, and the use of exemptions under subsection (b) of such section; and

(B) make recommendations the Inspector General determines to be necessary to the head of the agency, including recommendations for disciplinary action.

(2) AGENCY DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''agency'' has the meaning given that term under section 552(f) of title 5, United States Code.

(b) ADVERSE ACTIONS.—The withholding of information in a manner inconsistent with the requirements of section 552 of title 5, United States Code (including any rules, regulations, or other implementing guidelines), as determined by the appropriate supervisor, shall be a basis for disciplinary action in accordance with subchapter I, II, or V of chapter 75 of such title, as the case may be.

SEC. 5. OPEN GOVERNMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Archivist of the United States shall establish an Open Government Advisory Committee (in this section, referred to as the ''Committee''), an independent advisory committee to make recommendations for improving Government transparency.

(b) MEMBERSHIP; CHAIR; MEETINGS; QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS.—The Committee shall be composed of at least nine members appointed by the Archivist, one of whom shall be designated the Chair by the members, and shall meet at such times and places as may be designated by the Chair. Each member of the Committee shall be qualified by education, training, or experience to make recommendations on improving Government transparency. The membership of the Committee shall include—

(1) representatives of the Department of Justice and the Office of Government Information Services;

(2) at least two members with experience requesting information under section 552 of title 5, United States Code (including one member of the news media); and

(3) at least one member with expertise in information technology.

(c) COMPENSATION.—While serving on the business of the Committee, and while so serving away from home and the member's regular place of business, a member may be allowed travel expenses, as authorized by the Archivist.

(d) CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE.—The members of the Committee shall be considered to be special Government employees (as such term is defined in section 202 of title 18, United States Code).

(e) STAFF.—The Archivist may appoint and fix the compensation of such personnel as may be necessary to enable the Committee to carry out its functions. Any personnel of the Committee who are employees shall be employees under section 2105 of title 5, United States Code. Any Federal Government employee may be detailed to the Committee without reimbursement from the Committee, and such detailee shall retain the rights, status, and privileges of regular employment of such employee without interruption.

(f) APPLICABILITY OF THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall apply to the Committee and any subcommittee or subgroup thereof.

(g) DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.—The Archivist shall make publicly available the following information:

(1) The charter of the Committee.

(2) A description of the process used to establish and appoint the members of the Committee, including the following:

(A) The process for identifying prospective members.

(B) The process of selecting members for balance of viewpoints or expertise.

(C) The reason each member was appointed to the Committee.

(3) A list of all current members, including, for each member, the name of any person or entity that nominated the member.

(4) A summary of the process used by the Committee for making decisions.

(5) A transcript or audio or visual recording of each meeting of the Committee.

(6) Any written determination by the President or the Archivist, pursuant to section 10(d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.), to close a meeting or any portion of a meeting and the reasons for such determination.

(7) Notices of future meetings of the Committee.

(h) MANNER OF DISCLOSURE.—

(1) WEBSITE PUBLICATION.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Archivist shall make the information required to be disclosed under this section available electronically on the official public website of the National Archives and Records Administration at least 15 calendar days before each meeting of the Committee. If the Archivist determines that such timing is not practicable for any required information, the Archivist shall make the information available as soon as practicable but no later than 48 hours before the next meeting of the Committee.

(2) AVAILABILITY OF COMMITTEE MEETING.—The Archivist shall make available electronically, on the official public website of the National Archives and Records Administration, a transcript or audio or video recording of each Committee meeting not later than 30 calendar days after such meeting.

SEC. 6. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized or appropriated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

H.R. 1211, the FOIA Oversight and Implementation Act, or FOIA Act, is a bipartisan bill approved unanimously by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee last March. I cosponsored the legislation, which Ranking Member ELIJAH CUMMINGS authored.

The bill is a product of the joint effort by our staffs. The legislation has been endorsed by 29 nonpartisan transparency groups, including the Project On Government Oversight, known as POGO, Government in the Sunshine, the Sunlight Foundation, and the American Society of News Editors.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical at this time that the American people believe and actually receive the information that lets them understand what their government is doing.

A key provision of this bill is to codify requirements in a FOIA memorandum issued by President Obama and Attorney General Holder. This includes making the presumption of openness standard the law of the land. That means that an agency can only withhold information if the disclosure of such records would cause foreseeable harm. This shifts the burden of proof from the public requester seeking information about a government agency, with which he must now demonstrate that he has the need to the government being open and transparent, unless it has a good reason to withhold.

The FOIA Act of 2014 also requires an unprecedented level of proactive disclosure. That means that more information will be made available to the public without each individual interested in the information needing to file separate FOIA requests to get it.

Mr. Speaker, in plain English, if one person and then another person or one entity and another entity seem to want to have the same information, rather than the agencies possibly posting it publicly, they will be required to post it publicly, so that which a few agencies want to know or a few private organizations want to know, the entire public would have easy access. Another way of putting it is, if you are going to tell one person that it is reasonable to have public access, then all the public should have easy access to that information.

These proactive disclosure requirements are intended to make the information-sharing a routine part of government. Like the DATA Act passed earlier this year, which the House approved, the FOIA Act requires all information be posted in an electronic, publicly accessible format.

Raw data will be available as the original format so that it can be machine-searched and give the widest ability for the public to have not just access to the letters, but access to the meaning and the cross-meaning of this information.

Under this bill, more agencies will be using technology to increase transparency by processing FOIA requests through a centralized Web portal. Users will submit requests in one location, where agencies can automatically post their response. This kind of one-point access is something the public has long waited for from the Federal Government.

The legislation before the House today modestly amends the committee-reported bill by establishing an Open Government Advisory Committee, housed within the National Archives' Office of Government Information Services. The Open Government Advisory Committee will ensure that reform efforts continue after this bill is enacted.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment to the FOIA law is one of the most important additional accesses to the American people; and I might note with thanks that this is an initiative begun by this administration, by President Obama, that we believe should be there for all times.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman ISSA for sponsoring this bill with me. This bill, if enacted, would be a landmark reform of our most important open government law, the Freedom of Information Act.

This legislation would make significant improvements to the current law, which has not been consistently implemented.

During the Clinton administration, Attorney General Janet Reno adopted a policy under which the Department of Justice would defend an agency's use of a FOIA exemption only when the agency could reasonably foresee that disclosure would harm an interest protected by that exemption.

In the Bush administration, Attorney General John Ashcroft reversed this standard and directed the Justice Department to defend agency decisions to withhold records, as long as they had a legal basis for doing so.

President Obama, to his credit, on his first day in office, directed agencies to implement FOIA with a presumption of openness. Attorney General Holder overturned the Ashcroft standard and reinstated the foreseeable harm standard.

The legislation before us today would codify, in law, this presumption in favor of disclosure, no matter who is President.

Under this bill, an agency would not be allowed to withhold information in response to a FOIA request, unless disclosure is prohibited by law or would cause specific identifiable harm to an interest protected by one of FOIA's exemptions.

This bill also would create an advisory committee to make recommendations to improve government transparency. The President recently endorsed this idea in the Open Government National Action Plan issued by the administration in December of 2013.

This legislation also would create a pilot project to encourage participation in a centralized FOIA portal. A centralized portal, such as FOIAonline, that is run by EPA, allows requesters to use one Webcast to file requests to multiple agencies.

The bill also would strengthen the Office of Government Information

Services by enhancing its role in providing guidance to agencies and ensuring that agencies notify requesters of their right to use its mediation services.

The bill would strengthen the independence of this office by allowing it to send testimony and reports directly to Congress without approval from the Office of Management and Budget.

I urge every Member of this body to support this open government legislation by voting for it.

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

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

We don't often find in this body the kind of consensus behind something that, as the ranking member said, has gone both ways under different Presidents.

I am a proud Republican, but I believe that the order given by President Obama was the right order. The order given by President Bush, perhaps in light of 9/11, perhaps in light of other considerations, might have seemed right at the time.

But let me make something clear today: on our committee, there is unanimity. The American people must have access to all the information, unless there is a specific reason to withhold it.

This requirement under FOIA today will drive the DATA Act and other reforms that will cause information to be likely stored in formats that are easier for agencies to determine that which they must withhold. We think it is important.

Today, legions of people often spend countless hours redacting nothing more than one name or one Social Security number that cannot be found, except by a set of eyes scanning over it.

So, in addition to the American people getting what they are entitled to under this act, we believe that it will drive the kind of innovation automation that actually will save the American people money and cause more information to be available.

Just as census data is critical to our economy, so is access to what your government is doing, planning to do, or thought about, talked about, or did in the process of making laws, regulations, and rules.

So I join with my colleague in believing that this is a time in which we say this President acted properly in how he ordered something, we believe codifying it, so that no follow-on President could modify it or fail to deliver what this legislation envisions.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I am about to close.

Again, I want to thank Chairman ISSA for his hard work on this. This is so very, very important.

I often tell my constituents, Mr. Speaker, that this is our watch. We are the guardians of the democracy today, and it is important to us to pass on a stronger and a better democracy than the one we found when we came upon this Earth.

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A significant part of any democracy is openness, where people can know what the government is doing. When you have a representative government, people come to the town hall meetings trying to find out what is going on, and now they can go to computers and find out what is going on. We must have as much openness as possible and as is reasonable, and I think that this is a big step in the right direction of preserving that part of the democracy that calls for transparency.

So I agree with the chairman. This is so much bigger than us. This is not just about this moment. This is about generations yet unborn. This is about people trying simply to be a part of their democracy, who are trying to understand it, who are trying to use information so that they can be participants in it. If they do not know what is going on, it is kind of hard to participate. If they do not know what is going on, it is kind of hard to go to their representatives to urge them to make appropriate changes.

So, with that, I urge all of the Members of this body to vote in favor of this legislation.

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

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to thank my partner in this legislation, Mr. CUMMINGS.

In order to get this kind of legislation, you do need to make sure that you have dotted the i's, and I believe we have done so. The minor modification that was made between the time it left the committee and the floor is one that was done on a bipartisan basis. Were this to go back to our committee, of course it would pass unanimously. Therefore, I urge all Members to vote ''yes'' on H.R. 1211—to support the bill, to support freedom, to support the opportunity for the American people to know.

With that, 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. ISSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1211, 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. ISSA. 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.

FEDERAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION REFORM ACT

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1232) to amend titles 40, 41, and 44, United States Code, to eliminate duplication and waste in information technology acquisition and management, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1236

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 ''Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act''.

SEC. 2. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.
Sec. 2. Table of contents.
Sec. 3. Definitions.

TITLE I—MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WITHIN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Sec. 101. Increased authority of agency Chief Information Officers over information technology.
Sec. 102. Lead coordination role of Chief Information Officers Council.
Sec. 103. Reports by Government Accountability Office.

TITLE II—DATA CENTER OPTIMIZATION

Sec. 201. Purpose.
Sec. 202. Definitions.
Sec. 203. Federal data center optimization initiative.
Sec. 204. Performance requirements related to data center consolidation.
Sec. 205. Cost savings related to data center optimization.
Sec. 206. Reporting requirements to Congress and the Federal Chief Information Officer.

TITLE III—ELIMINATION OF DUPLICATION AND WASTE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION

Sec. 301. Inventory of information technology software assets.
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TITLE IV—STRENGTHENING AND STREAMLINING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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Sec. 401. Pilot program on interagency collaboration.
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Sec. 411. Expansion of training and use of information technology acquisition cadres.
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TITLE V—ADDITIONAL REFORMS

Sec. 501. Maximizing the benefit of the Federal strategic sourcing initiative.

Sec. 502. Governmentwide software purchasing program.
Sec. 503. Promoting transparency of blanket purchase agreements.
Sec. 504. Additional source selection technique in solicitations.
Sec. 505. Enhanced transparency in information technology investments.
Sec. 506. Enhanced communication between government and industry.
Sec. 507. Clarification of current law with respect to technology neutrality in acquisition of software.
Sec. 508. No additional funds authorized.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICERS COUNCIL.—The term ''Chief Acquisition Officers Council'' means the Chief Acquisition Officers Council established by section 1311(a) of title 41, United States Code.

(2) CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.—The term ''Chief Information Officer'' means a Chief Information Officer (as designated under section 3506(a)(2) of title 44, United States Code) of an agency listed in section 901(b) of title 31, United States Code.

(3) CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS COUNCIL.—The term ''Chief Information Officers Council'' or ''CIO Council'' means the Chief Information Officers Council established by section 3603(a) of title 44, United States Code.

(4) DIRECTOR.—The term ''Director'' means the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

(5) FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term ''Federal agency'' means each agency listed in section 901(b) of title 31, United States Code.

(6) FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.—The term ''Federal Chief Information Officer'' means the Administrator of the Office of Electronic Government established under section 3602 of title 44, United States Code.

(7) INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OR IT.—The term ''information technology'' or ''IT'' has the meaning provided in section 11101(6) of title 40, United States Code.

(8) RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ''relevant congressional committees'' means each of the following:

(A) The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

(B) The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.

TITLE I—MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WITHIN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

SEC. 101. INCREASED AUTHORITY OF AGENCY CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS OVER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

(a) PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT OF CIOS OF CERTAIN AGENCIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 11315 of title 40, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by redesignating subsection (a) as subsection (e) and moving such subsection to the end of the section; and

(B) by inserting before subsection (b) the following new subsection (a):

''(a) PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT OR DESIGNATION OF CERTAIN CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—There shall be within each agency listed in section 901(b)(1) of title 31 an agency Chief Information Officer. Each agency Chief Information Officer shall—

''(A)(i) be appointed by the President; or

''(ii) be designated by the President, in consultation with the head of the agency; and

''(B) be appointed or designated, as applicable, from among individuals who possess demonstrated ability in general management of, and knowledge of and extensive practical experience in, information technology management practices in large governmental or business entities.

''(2) RESPONSIBILITIES.—An agency Chief Information Officer appointed or designated under this section shall report directly to the head of the agency and carry out, on a full-time basis, responsibilities as set forth in this section and in section 3506(a) of title 44 for Chief Information Officers designated under paragraph (2) of such section.''.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 3506(a)(2) of title 44, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by striking ''(A) Except as provided under subparagraph (B), the head of each agency'' and inserting ''The head of each agency, other than an agency with a Presidentially appointed or designated Chief Information Officer as provided in section 11315(a)(1) of title 40,''; and

(B) by striking subparagraph (B).

(b) AUTHORITY RELATING TO BUDGET AND PERSONNEL.—Section 11315 of title 40, United States Code, is further amended by inserting after subsection (c) the following new subsection:

''(d) ADDITIONAL AUTHORITIES FOR CERTAIN CIOS.—

''(1) BUDGET-RELATED AUTHORITY.—

''(A) PLANNING.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the head of each agency listed in section 901(b)(1) or 901(b)(2) of title 31 and in section 102 of title 5 shall ensure that the Chief Information Officer of the agency has the authority to participate in decisions regarding the budget planning process related to information technology or programs that include significant information technology components.

''(B) ALLOCATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, amounts appropriated for any agency listed in section 901(b)(1) or 901(b)(2) of title 31 and in section 102 of title 5 for any fiscal year that are available for information technology shall be allocated within the agency, consistent with the provisions of appropriations Acts and budget guidelines and recommendations from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in such manner as specified by, or approved by, the Chief Information Officer of the agency in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer of the agency and budget officials.

''(2) PERSONNEL-RELATED AUTHORITY.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the head of each agency listed in section 901(b)(1) or 901(b)(2) of title 31 shall ensure that the Chief Information Officer of the agency has the authority necessary to approve the hiring of personnel who will have information technology responsibilities within the agency and to require that such personnel have the obligation to report to the Chief Information Officer in a manner considered sufficient by the Chief Information Officer.''.

(c) SINGLE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER IN EACH AGENCY.—

(1) REQUIREMENT.—Section 3506(a)(3) of title 44, United States Code, is amended—

(A) by inserting ''(A)'' after ''(3)''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(B) Each agency shall have only one individual with the title and designation of 'Chief Information Officer'. Any bureau, office, or subordinate organization within the agency may designate one individual with the title 'Deputy Chief Information Officer', 'Associate Chief Information Officer', or 'Assistant Chief Information Officer'.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 3506(a)(3)(B) of title 44, United States Code, as added by paragraph (1), shall take effect as of October 1, 2014. Any individual serving in a position affected by such section before such date may continue in that position if the requirements of such section are fulfilled with respect to that individual.

SEC. 102. LEAD COORDINATION ROLE OF CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICERS COUNCIL.

(a) LEAD COORDINATION ROLE.—Subsection (d) of section 3603 of title 44, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''(d) LEAD INTERAGENCY FORUM.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Council is designated the lead interagency forum for improving agency coordination of practices related to the design, development, modernization, use, operation, sharing, performance, and review of Federal Government information resources investment. As the lead interagency forum, the Council shall develop cross-agency portfolio management practices to allow and encourage the development of cross-agency shared services and shared platforms. The Council shall also issue guidelines and practices for infrastructure and common information technology applications, including expansion of the Federal Enterprise Architecture process if appropriate. The guidelines and practices may address broader transparency, common inputs, common outputs, and outcomes achieved. The guidelines and practices shall be used as a basis for comparing performance across diverse missions and operations in various agencies.

''(2) REPORT.—Not later than December 1 in each of the 6 years following the date of the enactment of this paragraph, the Council shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a report (to be known as the 'CIO Council Report') summarizing the Council's activities in the preceding fiscal year and containing such recommendations for further congressional action to fulfill its mission as the Council considers appropriate.

''(3) RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—For purposes of the report required by paragraph (2), the relevant congressional committees are each of the following:

''(A) The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

''(B) The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.''.

(b) ADDITIONAL FUNCTION.—Subsection (f) of section 3603 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(8) Assist the Administrator in developing and providing guidance for effective operations of the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center authorized under section 11501 of title 40.''.

(c) REFERENCES TO ADMINISTRATOR OF E-GOVERNMENT AS FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.—

(1) REFERENCES.—Section 3602(b) of title 44, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following: ''The Administrator may also be referred to as the Federal Chief Information Officer.''.

(2) DEFINITION.—Section 3601(1) of such title is amended by inserting ''or Federal Chief Information Officer'' before ''means''.

SEC. 103. REPORTS BY GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE.

(a) REQUIREMENT TO EXAMINE EFFECTIVENESS.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall examine the effectiveness of the Chief Information Officers Council in meeting its responsibilities under section 3603(d) of title 44, United States Code, as added by section 102, with particular focus on—

(1) whether agencies are actively participating in the Council and heeding the Council's advice and guidance; and

(2) whether the Council is actively using and developing the capabilities of the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center authorized under section 11501 of title 40, United States Code, as added by section 401.

(b) REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a report containing the findings and recommendations of the Comptroller General from the examination required by subsection (a).

TITLE II—DATA CENTER OPTIMIZATION

SEC. 201. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this title is to optimize Federal data center usage and efficiency.

SEC. 202. DEFINITIONS.

In this title:

(1) FEDERAL DATA CENTER OPTIMIZATION INITIATIVE.—The term ''Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative'' or the ''Initiative'' means the initiative developed and implemented by the Director, through the Federal Chief Information Officer, as required under section 203.

(2) COVERED AGENCY.—The term ''covered agency'' means any agency included in the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative.

(3) DATA CENTER.—The term ''data center'' means a closet, room, floor, or building for the storage, management, and dissemination of data and information, as defined by the Federal Chief Information Officer under guidance issued pursuant to this section.

(4) FEDERAL DATA CENTER.—The term ''Federal data center'' means any data center of a covered agency used or operated by a covered agency, by a contractor of a covered agency, or by another organization on behalf of a covered agency.

(5) SERVER UTILIZATION.—The term ''server utilization'' refers to the activity level of a server relative to its maximum activity level, expressed as a percentage.

(6) POWER USAGE EFFECTIVENESS.—The term ''power usage effectiveness'' means the ratio obtained by dividing the total amount of electricity and other power consumed in running a data center by the power consumed by the information and communications technology in the data center.

SEC. 203. FEDERAL DATA CENTER OPTIMIZATION INITIATIVE.

(a) REQUIREMENT FOR INITIATIVE.—The Federal Chief Information Officer, in consultation with the chief information officers of covered agencies, shall develop and implement an initiative, to be known as the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative, to optimize the usage and efficiency of Federal data centers by meeting the requirements of this Act and taking additional measures, as appropriate.

(b) REQUIREMENT FOR PLAN.—Within 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Chief Information Officer, in consultation with the chief information officers of covered agencies, shall develop and submit to Congress a plan for implementation of the Initiative required by subsection (a) by each covered agency. In developing the plan, the Federal Chief Information Officer shall take into account the findings and recommendations of the Comptroller General review required by section 205(e).

(c) MATTERS COVERED.—The plan shall include—

(1) descriptions of how covered agencies will use reductions in floor space, energy use, infrastructure, equipment, applications, personnel, increases in multiorganizational use, server virtualization, cloud computing, and other appropriate methods to meet the requirements of the initiative; and

(2) appropriate consideration of shifting Federally owned data center workload to commercially owned data centers.

SEC. 204. PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO DATA CENTER CONSOLIDATION.

(a) SERVER UTILIZATION.—Each covered agency may use the following methods to achieve the maximum server utilization possible as determined by the Federal Chief Information Officer:

(1) The closing of existing data centers that lack adequate server utilization, as determined by the Federal Chief Information Officer. If the agency fails to close such data centers, the agency shall provide a detailed explanation as to why this data center should remain in use as part of the submitted plan. The Federal Chief Information Officer shall include an assessment of the agency explanation in the annual report to Congress.

(2) The consolidation of services within existing data centers to increase server utilization rates.

(3) Any other method that the Federal Chief Information Officer, in consultation with the chief information officers of covered agencies, determines necessary to optimize server utilization.

(b) POWER USAGE EFFECTIVENESS.—Each covered agency may use the following methods to achieve the maximum energy efficiency possible as determined by the Federal Chief Information Officer:

(1) The use of the measurement of power usage effectiveness to calculate data center energy efficiency.

(2) The use of power meters in facilities dedicated to data center operations to frequently measure power consumption over time.

(3) The establishment of power usage effectiveness goals for each data center.

(4) The adoption of best practices for managing—

(A) temperature and airflow in facilities dedicated to data center operations; and

(B) power supply efficiency.

(5) The implementation of any other method that the Federal Chief Information Officer, in consultation with the Chief Information Officers of covered agencies, determines necessary to optimize data center energy efficiency.

SEC. 205. COST SAVINGS RELATED TO DATA CENTER OPTIMIZATION.

(a) REQUIREMENT TO TRACK COSTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each covered agency shall track costs resulting from implementation of the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative within the agency and submit a report on those costs annually to the Federal Chief Information Officer. Covered agencies shall determine the net costs from data consolidation on an annual basis.

(2) FACTORS.—In calculating net costs each year under paragraph (1), a covered agency shall use the following factors:

(A) Energy costs.

(B) Personnel costs.

(C) Real estate costs.

(D) Capital expense costs.

(E) Maintenance and support costs such as operating subsystem, database, hardware, and software license expense costs.

(F) Other appropriate costs, as determined by the agency in consultation with the Federal Chief Information Officer.

(b) REQUIREMENT TO TRACK SAVINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each covered agency shall track realized and projected savings resulting from implementation of the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative within the agency and submit a report on those savings annually to the Federal Chief Information Officer. Covered agencies shall determine the net savings from data consolidation on an annual basis.

(2) FACTORS.—In calculating net savings each year under paragraph (1), a covered agency shall use the following factors:

(A) Energy savings.

(B) Personnel savings.

(C) Real estate savings.

(D) Capital expense savings.

(E) Maintenance and support savings such as operating subsystem, database, hardware, and software license expense savings.

(F) Other appropriate savings, as determined by the agency in consultation with the Federal Chief Information Officer.

(3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—The Federal Chief Information Officer shall make publicly available a summary of realized and projected savings for each covered agency. The Federal Chief Information Officer shall identify any covered agency that failed to provide the annual report required under paragraph (1).

(c) REQUIREMENT TO USE COST-EFFECTIVE MEASURES.—Covered agencies shall use the most cost-effective measures to implement the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative, such as using estimation to measure or track costs and savings using a methodology approved by the Federal Chief Information Officer.

(d) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REVIEW.—Not later than 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall examine methods for calculating savings from the Initiative and using them for the purposes identified in subsection (d), including establishment and use of a special revolving fund that supports data centers and server optimization, and shall submit to the Federal Chief Information Officer and Congress a report on the Comptroller General's findings and recommendations.

SEC. 206. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS TO CONGRESS AND THE FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.

(a) AGENCY REQUIREMENT TO REPORT TO CIO.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), each covered agency each year shall submit to the Federal Chief Information Officer a report on the implementation of the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative, including savings resulting from such implementation. The report shall include an update of the agency's plan for implementing the Initiative.

(2) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.—The Secretary of Defense shall comply with paragraph (1) each year by submitting to the Federal Chief Information Officer a report with relevant information collected under section 2867 of Public Law 112–81 (10 U.S.C 2223a note) or a copy of the report required under section 2867(d) of such law.

(b) FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER REQUIREMENT TO REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Each year, the Federal Chief Information Officer shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a report that assesses agency progress in carrying out the Federal Data Center Optimization Initiative and updates the plan under section 203. The report may be included as part of the annual report required under section 3606 of title 44, United States Code.

TITLE III—ELIMINATION OF DUPLICATION AND WASTE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION

SEC. 301. INVENTORY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOFTWARE ASSETS.

(a) PLAN.—The Director shall develop a plan for conducting a Governmentwide inventory of information technology software assets.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The plan required by subsection (a) shall cover the following:

(1) The manner in which Federal agencies can achieve the greatest possible economies of scale and cost savings in the procurement of information technology software assets, through measures such as reducing the procurement of new software licenses until such time as agency needs exceed the number of existing and unused licenses.

(2) The capability to conduct ongoing Governmentwide inventories of all existing software licenses on an application-by-application basis, including duplicative, unused, overused, and underused licenses, and to assess the need of agencies for software licenses.

(3) A Governmentwide spending analysis to provide knowledge about how much is being spent for software products or services to support decisions for strategic sourcing under the Federal strategic sourcing program managed by the Office of Federal Procurement Policy.

(c) AVAILABILITY.—The inventory of information technology software assets shall be available to Chief Information Officers and such other Federal officials as the Chief Information Officers may, in consultation with the Chief Information Officers Council, designate.

(d) DEADLINE AND SUBMISSION TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall complete and submit to Congress the plan required by subsection (a).

(e) IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall complete implementation of the plan required by subsection (a).

(f) REVIEW BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall review the plan required by subsection (a) and submit to the relevant congressional committees a report on the review.

SEC. 302. WEBSITE CONSOLIDATION AND TRANSPARENCY.

(a) WEBSITE CONSOLIDATION.—The Director shall—

(1) in consultation with Federal agencies, and after reviewing the directory of public Federal Government websites of each agency (as required to be established and updated under section 207(f)(3) of the E-Government Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–347; 44 U.S.C. 3501 note)), assess all the publicly available websites of Federal agencies to determine whether there are duplicative or overlapping websites; and

(2) require Federal agencies to eliminate or consolidate those websites that are duplicative or overlapping.

(b) WEBSITE TRANSPARENCY.—The Director shall issue guidance to Federal agencies to ensure that the data on publicly available websites of the agencies are open and accessible to the public.

(c) MATTERS COVERED.—In preparing the guidance required by subsection (b), the Director shall—

(1) develop guidelines, standards, and best practices for interoperability and transparency;

(2) identify interfaces that provide for shared, open solutions on the publicly available websites of the agencies; and

(3) ensure that Federal agency Internet home pages, web-based forms, and web-based applications are accessible to individuals with disabilities in conformance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d).

(d) DEADLINE FOR GUIDANCE.—The guidance required by subsection (b) shall be issued not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 303. TRANSITION TO THE CLOUD.

(a) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that transition to cloud computing offers significant potential benefits for the implementation of Federal information technology projects in terms of flexibility, cost, and operational benefits.

(b) GOVERNMENTWIDE APPLICATION.—In assessing cloud computing opportunities, the Chief Information Officers Council shall define policies and guidelines for the adoption of Governmentwide programs providing for a standardized approach to security assessment and operational authorization for cloud products and services.

(c) ADDITIONAL BUDGET AUTHORITIES FOR TRANSITION.—In transitioning to the cloud, a Chief Information Officer of an agency listed in section 901(b) of title 31, United States Code, may establish such cloud service Working Capital Funds, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer of the agency, as may be necessary to transition to cloud-based solutions. Any establishment of a new Working Capital Fund under this subsection shall be reported to the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate and relevant Congressional committees.

SEC. 304. ELIMINATION OF UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION OF CONTRACTS BY REQUIRING BUSINESS CASE ANALYSIS.

(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to leverage the Government's buying power and achieve administrative efficiencies and cost savings by eliminating unnecessary duplication of contracts.

(b) REQUIREMENT FOR BUSINESS CASE APPROVAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 33 of title 41, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 3312. Requirement for business case approval for new Governmentwide contracts.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—An executive agency may not issue a solicitation for a covered Governmentwide contract unless the agency performs a business case analysis for the contract and obtains an approval of the business case analysis from the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy.

''(b) REVIEW OF BUSINESS CASE ANALYSIS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—With respect to any covered Governmentwide contract, the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy shall review the business case analysis submitted for the contract and provide an approval or disapproval within 60 days after the date of submission. Any business case analysis not disapproved within such 60-day period is deemed to be approved.

''(2) BASIS FOR APPROVAL OF BUSINESS CASE.—The Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy shall approve or disapprove a business case analysis based on the adequacy of the analysis submitted. The Administrator shall give primary consideration to whether an agency has demonstrated a compelling need that cannot be satisfied by existing Governmentwide contract in a timely and cost-effective manner.

''(c) CONTENT OF BUSINESS CASE ANALYSIS.—The Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy shall issue guidance specifying the content for a business case analysis submitted pursuant to this section. At a minimum, the business case analysis shall include details on the administrative resources needed for such contract, including an analysis of all direct and indirect costs to the Federal Government of awarding and administering such contract and the impact such contract will have on the ability of the Federal Government to leverage its purchasing power.

''(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) COVERED GOVERNMENTWIDE CONTRACT.—The term 'covered Governmentwide contract' means any contract, blanket purchase agreement, or other contractual instrument for acquisition of information technology or other goods or services that allows for an indefinite number of orders to be placed under the contract, agreement, or instrument, and that is established by one executive agency for use by multiple executive agencies to obtain goods or services. The term does not include—

''(A) a multiple award schedule contract awarded by the General Services Administration;

''(B) a Governmentwide acquisition contract for information technology awarded pursuant to sections 11302(e) and 11314(a)(2) of title 40;

''(C) orders under Governmentwide contracts in existence before the effective date of this section; or

''(D) any contract in an amount less than $10,000,000, determined on an average annual basis.

''(2) EXECUTIVE AGENCY.—The term 'executive agency' has the meaning provided that term by section 105 of title 5.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 33 of title 41, United States Code, is amended by adding after the item relating to section 3311 the following new item:

''3312. Requirement for business case approval for new Governmentwide contracts.''.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than June 1 in each of the next 6 years following the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a report on the implementation of section 3312 of title 41, United States Code, as added by subsection (b), including a summary of the submissions, reviews, approvals, and disapprovals of business case analyses pursuant to such section.

(d) GUIDANCE.—The Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy shall issue guidance for implementing section 3312 of such title.

(e) REVISION OF FAR.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Acquisition Regulation shall be amended to implement section 3312 of such title.

(g) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 3312 of such title is effective on and after 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE IV—STRENGTHENING AND STREAMLINING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Subtitle A—Strengthening and Streamlining IT Program Management Practices

SEC. 401. PILOT PROGRAM ON INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 115 of title 40, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

"CHAPTER 115—INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

''Sec.

''11501. Pilot program on interagency collaboration.

"§ 11501. Pilot program on interagency collaboration

''(a) REQUIREMENT TO CONDUCT PILOT PROGRAM.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall conduct a three-year pilot program in accordance with the requirements of this section to test alternative approaches for the management of commonly used information technology by executive agencies.

''(b) ESTABLISHMENT AND PURPOSES.—For purposes of the pilot program, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall establish a Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center

(hereafter in this section referred to as the 'Collaboration Center') within the Office of Electronic Government established under section 3602 of title 44. The purpose of the Collaboration Center is to serve as a resource for Federal agencies, available on an optional-use basis, to assist and promote coordinated program management practices and to develop and maintain requirements for the acquisition of IT infrastructure and common applications commonly used by various Federal agencies.

''(c) ORGANIZATION OF CENTER.—

''(1) MEMBERSHIP.—The Center shall consist of the following members:

''(A) An appropriate number, as determined by the CIO Council, but not less than 12, full-time program managers or cost specialists, all of whom have appropriate experience in the private or Government sector in managing or overseeing acquisitions of IT infrastructure and common applications.

''(B) At least 1 full-time detailee from each of the Federal agencies listed in section 901(b) of title 31, nominated by the respective agency chief information officer for a detail period of not less than 1 year.

''(2) WORKING GROUPS.—The Collaboration Center shall have working groups that specialize in IT infrastructure and common applications identified by the CIO Council. Each working group shall be headed by a separate dedicated program manager appointed by the Federal Chief Information Officer.

''(d) CAPABILITIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE COLLABORATION CENTER.—For each of the IT infrastructure and common application areas identified by the CIO Council, the Collaboration Center shall perform the following roles, and any other functions as directed by the Federal Chief Information Officer:

''(1) Develop, maintain, and disseminate requirements suitable to establish contracts that will meet the common and general needs of various Federal agencies as determined by the Center. In doing so, the Center shall give maximum consideration to the adoption of commercial standards and industry acquisition best practices, including opportunities for shared services, consideration of total cost of ownership, preference for industry-neutral functional specifications leveraging open industry standards and competition, and use of long-term contracts, as appropriate.

''(2) Develop, maintain, and disseminate reliable cost estimates.

''(3) Lead the review of significant or troubled IT investments or acquisitions as identified by the CIO Council.

''(4) Provide expert aid to troubled IT investments or acquisitions.

''(e) GUIDANCE.—The Director, in consultation with the Chief Information Officers Council, shall issue guidance addressing the scope and operation of the Collaboration Center. The guidance shall require that the collaboration Center report to the Federal Chief Information Officer.

''(f) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall annually submit to the relevant congressional committees a report detailing the organization, staff, and activities of the Collaboration Center, including—

''(A) a list of IT infrastructure and common applications the Center assisted;

''(B) an assessment of the Center's achievement in promoting efficiency, shared services, and elimination of unnecessary Government requirements that are contrary to commercial best practices; and

''(C) the use and expenditure of amounts in the Fund established under subsection (i).

''(2) INCLUSION IN OTHER REPORT.—The report may be included as part of the annual E-Government status report required under section 3606 of title 44.

''(g) GUIDELINES FOR ACQUISITION OF IT INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMON APPLICATIONS.—

''(1) GUIDELINES.—The Collaboration Center shall establish guidelines that, to the maximum extent possible, eliminate inconsistent practices among executive agencies and ensure uniformity and consistency in acquisition processes for IT infrastructure and common applications across the Federal Government.

''(2) CENTRAL WEBSITE.—In preparing the guidelines, the Collaboration Center, in consultation with the Chief Acquisition Officers Council, shall offer executive agencies the option of accessing a central website for best practices, templates, and other relevant information.

''(h) PRICING TRANSPARENCY.—The Collaboration Center, in collaboration with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, the Chief Acquisition Officers Council, the General Services Administration, and the Assisted Acquisition Centers of Excellence, shall compile a price list and catalogue containing current pricing information by vendor for each of its IT infrastructure and common applications categories. The price catalogue shall contain any price provided by a vendor in a contract awarded for the same or similar good or service to any executive agency. The catalogue shall be developed in a fashion ensuring that it may be used for pricing comparisons and pricing analysis using standard data formats. The price catalogue shall not be made public, but shall be accessible to executive agencies.

''(i) AUTHORIZATION TO USE FUND.—In any fiscal year, notwithstanding section 321(c) of title 40, up to five percent of the fees collected during the prior fiscal year under the multiple award schedule contracts entered into by the Administrator of General Services and credited to the Acquisition Services Fund under section 321 of title 40, may be used to fund the activities of the Collaboration Center. Each fiscal year, the Director, in consultation with the Federal Chief Information Officer, shall determine an appropriate amount needed to operate the Collaboration Center and the Administrator of General Services shall transfer amounts only to the extent and in such amounts as are provided in advance in appropriation acts from the Fund to the Director for the Center.

''(j) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) EXECUTIVE AGENCY.—The term 'executive agency' has the meaning provided that term by section 105 of title 5.

''(2) FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER.—The term 'Federal Chief Information Officer' means the Administrator of the Office of Electronic Government established under section 3602 of title 44.

''(3) RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term 'relevant congressional committees' means each of the following:

''(A) The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

''(B) The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The item relating to chapter 115 in the table of chapters at the beginning of subtitle III of title 40, United States Code, is amended to read as follows:

''115. Information Technology Acquisition Management Practices ..... 11501''.

(b) DEADLINES.—

(1) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall issue guidance under section 11501(e) of title 40, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(2) CENTER.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director shall establish the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center, in accordance with section 11501(b) of such title, as so added.

(3) GUIDELINES.—Not later than 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center shall establish guidelines in accordance with section 11501(g) of such title, as so added.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 3602(c) of title 44, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''and'' at the end of paragraph (2);

(2) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4); and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph (3):

''(3) all of the functions of the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center, as required under section 11501 of title 40; and''.

SEC. 402. DESIGNATION OF ASSISTED ACQUISITION CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.

(a) DESIGNATION.—Chapter 115 of title 40, United States Code, as amended by section 401, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''SEC. 11502. ASSISTED ACQUISITION CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE.

''(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to develop specialized assisted acquisition centers of excellence within the Federal Government to serve as a resource for Federal agencies, available on an optional-use basis, to assist and promote—

''(1) the effective use of best acquisition practices;

''(2) the development of specialized expertise in the acquisition of information technology; and

''(3) Governmentwide sharing of acquisition capability to augment any shortage in the information technology acquisition workforce.

''(b) DESIGNATION OF AACEs.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this section, and every 3 years thereafter, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with the Chief Acquisition Officers Council and the Chief Information Officers Council, shall designate, redesignate, or withdraw the designation of acquisition centers of excellence within various executive agencies to carry out the functions set forth in subsection (d) in an area of specialized acquisition expertise as determined by the Director. Each such center of excellence shall be known as an 'Assisted Acquisition Center of Excellence' or an 'AACE'.

''(c) USE OF EXISTING AUTHORITY.—This section provides no new authority to establish a franchise fund or revolving fund.

''(d) FUNCTIONS.—The functions of each AACE are as follows:

''(1) BEST PRACTICES.—To promote, develop, and implement the use of best acquisition practices in the area of specialized acquisition expertise that the AACE is designated to carry out by the Director under subsection (b).

''(2) ASSISTED ACQUISITIONS.—To assist all Government agencies in the expedient, strategic, and cost-effective acquisition of the information technology goods or services covered by such area of specialized acquisition expertise by engaging in repeated and frequent acquisition of similar information technology requirements.

''(3) DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING OF IT ACQUISITION WORKFORCE.—To assist in recruiting and training IT acquisition cadres (referred to in section 1704(j) of title 41).

''(e) CRITERIA.—In designating, redesignating, or withdrawing the designation of an AACE, the Director shall consider, at a minimum, the following matters:

''(1) The subject matter expertise of the host agency in a specific area of information technology acquisition.

''(2) For acquisitions of IT infrastructure and common applications covered by the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center authorized under section 11501 of this title, the ability and willingness to collaborate with the Collaboration Center and adhere to the requirements standards established by the Collaboration Center.

''(3) The ability of an AACE to develop customized requirements documents that meet the needs of executive agencies as well as the current industry standards and commercial best practices.

''(4) The ability of an AACE to consistently award and manage various contracts, task or delivery orders, and other acquisition arrangements in a timely, cost-effective, and compliant manner.

''(5) The ability of an AACE to aggregate demands from multiple executive agencies for similar information technology goods or services and fulfill those demands in one acquisition.

''(6) The ability of an AACE to acquire innovative or emerging commercial and noncommercial technologies using various contracting methods, including ways to lower the entry barriers for small businesses with limited Government contracting experiences.

''(7) The ability of an AACE to maximize commercial item acquisition, effectively manage high-risk contract types, increase competition, promote small business participation, and maximize use of available Governmentwide contracts.

''(8) The existence of an in-house cost estimating group with expertise to consistently develop reliable cost estimates that are accurate, comprehensive, well-documented, and credible.

''(9) The ability of an AACE to employ best practices and educate requesting agencies, to the maximum extent practicable, regarding critical factors underlying successful major IT acquisitions, including the following factors:

''(A) Active engagement by program officials with stakeholders.

''(B) Possession by program staff of the necessary knowledge and skills.

''(C) Support of the programs by senior department and agency executives.

''(D) Involvement by end users and stakeholders in the development of requirements.

''(E) Participation by end users in testing of system functionality prior to formal end user acceptance testing.

''(F) Stability and consistency of Government and contractor staff.

''(G) Prioritization of requirements by program staff.

''(H) Maintenance of regular communication with the prime contractor by program officials.

''(I) Receipt of sufficient funding by programs.

''(10) The ability of an AACE to run an effective acquisition intern program in collaboration with the Federal Acquisition Institute or the Defense Acquisition University.

''(11) The ability of an AACE to effectively and properly manage fees received for assisted acquisitions pursuant to this section.

''(f) FUNDS RECEIVED BY AACEs.—

''(1) AVAILABILITY.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law or regulation, funds obligated and transferred from an executive agency in a fiscal year to an AACE for the acquisition of goods or services covered by an area of specialized acquisition expertise of an AACE, regardless of whether the requirements are severable or non-severable, shall remain available for awards of contracts by the AACE for the same general requirements for the next 5 fiscal years following the fiscal year in which the funds were transferred.

''(2) TRANSITION TO NEW AACE.—If the AACE to which the funds are provided under paragraph (1) becomes unable to fulfill the requirements of the executive agency from which the funds were provided, the funds may be provided to a different AACE to fulfill such requirements. The funds so provided shall be used for the same purpose and remain available for the same period of time as applied when provided to the original AACE.

''(3) RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING AUTHORITIES.—This subsection does not limit any existing authorities an AACE may have under its revolving or working capital funds authorities.

''(g) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REVIEW OF AACE.—

''(1) REVIEW.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall review and assess—

''(A) the use and management of fees received by the AACEs pursuant to this section to ensure that an appropriate fee structure is established and enforced to cover activities addressed in this section and that no excess fees are charged or retained; and

''(B) the effectiveness of the AACEs in achieving the purpose described in subsection (a), including review of contracts.

''(2) REPORTS.—Not later than 1 year after the designation or redesignation of AACES under subsection (b), the Comptroller General shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a report containing the findings and assessment under paragraph (1).

''(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) ASSISTED ACQUISITION.—The term 'assisted acquisition' means a type of interagency acquisition in which the parties enter into an interagency agreement pursuant to which—

''(A) the servicing agency performs acquisition activities on the requesting agency's behalf, such as awarding, administering, or closing out a contract, task order, delivery order, or blanket purchase agreement; and

''(B) funding is provided through a franchise fund, the Acquisition Services Fund in section 321 of this title, sections 1535 and 1536 of title 31, or other available methods.

''(2) EXECUTIVE AGENCY.—The term 'executive agency' has the meaning provided that term by section 133 of title 41.

''(3) RELEVANT CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term 'relevant congressional committees' has the meaning provided that term by section 11501 of this title.

''(i) REVISION OF FAR.—The Federal Acquisition Regulation shall be amended to implement this section.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 115 of title 40, United States Code, as amended by section 401, is further amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''11502. Assisted Acquisition Centers of Excellence.''.

Subtitle B—Strengthening IT Acquisition Workforce

SEC. 411. EXPANSION OF TRAINING AND USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION CADRES.

(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to ensure timely progress by Federal agencies toward developing, strengthening, and deploying personnel with highly specialized skills in information technology acquisition, including program and project managers, to be known as information technology acquisition cadres.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Section 1704 of title 41, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(j) STRATEGIC PLAN ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION CADRES.—

''(1) FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN TO CONGRESS.—Not later than June 1 following the date of the enactment of this subsection, the Director shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a 5-year strategic plan (to be known as the 'IT Acquisition Cadres Strategic Plan') to develop, strengthen, and solidify information technology acquisition cadres. The plan shall include a timeline for implementation of the plan and identification of individuals responsible for specific elements of the plan during the 5-year period covered by the plan.

''(2) MATTERS COVERED.—The plan shall address, at a minimum, the following matters:

''(A) Current information technology acquisition staffing challenges in Federal agencies, by previous year's information technology acquisition value, and by the Federal Government as a whole.

''(B) The variety and complexity of information technology acquisitions conducted by each Federal agency covered by the plan, and the specialized information technology acquisition workforce needed to effectively carry out such acquisitions.

''(C) The development of a sustainable funding model to support efforts to hire, retain, and train an information technology acquisition cadre of appropriate size and skill to effectively carry out the acquisition programs of the Federal agencies covered by the plan, including an examination of interagency funding methods and a discussion of how the model of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund could be applied to civilian agencies.

''(D) Any strategic human capital planning necessary to hire, retain, and train an information acquisition cadre of appropriate size and skill at each Federal agency covered by the plan.

''(E) Governmentwide training standards and certification requirements necessary to enhance the mobility and career opportunities of the Federal information technology acquisition cadre within the Federal agencies covered by the plan.

''(F) New and innovative approaches to workforce development and training, including cross-functional training, rotational development, and assignments both within and outside the Government.

''(G) Appropriate consideration and alignment with the needs and priorities of the Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center, Assisted Acquisition Centers of Excellence, and acquisition intern programs.

''(H) Assessment of the current workforce competency and usage trends in evaluation technique to obtain best value, including proper handling of tradeoffs between price and nonprice factors.

''(I) Assessment of the current workforce competency in designing and aligning performance goals, life cycle costs, and contract incentives.

''(J) Assessment of the current workforce competency in avoiding brand-name preference and using industry-neutral functional specifications to leverage open industry standards and competition.

''(K) Use of integrated program teams, including fully dedicated program managers, for each complex information technology investment.

''(L) Proper assignment of recognition or accountability to the members of an integrated program team for both individual functional goals and overall program success or failure.

''(M) The development of a technology fellows program that includes provisions for recruiting, for rotation of assignments, and for partnering directly with universities with well-recognized information technology programs.

''(N) The capability to properly manage other transaction authority (where such authority is granted), including ensuring that the use of the authority is warranted due to unique technical challenges, rapid adoption of innovative or emerging commercial or noncommercial technologies, or other circumstances that cannot readily be satisfied using a contract, grant, or cooperative agreement in accordance with applicable law and the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

''(O) The use of student internship and scholarship programs as a talent pool for permanent hires and the use and impact of special hiring authorities and flexibilities to recruit diverse candidates.

''(P) The assessment of hiring manager satisfaction with the hiring process and hiring outcomes, including satisfaction with the quality of applicants interviewed and hires made.

''(Q) The assessment of applicant satisfaction with the hiring process, including the clarity of the hiring announcement, the user-friendliness of the application process, communication from the hiring manager or agency regarding application status, and timeliness of the hiring decision.

''(R) The assessment of new hire satisfaction with the onboarding process, including the orientation process, and investment in training and development for employees during their first year of employment.

''(S) Any other matters the Director considers appropriate.

''(3) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than June 1 in each of the 5 years following the year of submission of the plan required by paragraph (1), the Director shall submit to the relevant congressional committees an annual report outlining the progress made pursuant to the plan.

''(4) GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REVIEW OF THE PLAN AND ANNUAL REPORT.—

''(A) Not later than 1 year after the submission of the plan required by paragraph (1), the Comptroller General of the United States shall review the plan and submit to the relevant congressional committees a report on the review.

''(B) Not later than 6 months after the submission of the first, third, and fifth annual report required under paragraph (3), the Comptroller General shall independently assess the findings of the annual report and brief the relevant congressional committees on the Comptroller General's findings and recommendations to ensure the objectives of the plan are accomplished.

''(5) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

''(A) The term 'Federal agency' means each agency listed in section 901(b) of title 31.

''(B) The term 'relevant congressional committees' means each of the following:

''(i) The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

''(ii) The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate.''.

SEC. 412. PLAN ON STRENGTHENING PROGRAM AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE.

(a) PLAN ON STRENGTHENING PROGRAM AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE.—Not later than June 1 following the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a plan for improving management of IT programs and projects.

(b) MATTERS COVERED.—The plan required by subsection (a) shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Creation of a specialized career path for program management.

(2) The development of a competency model for program management consistent with the IT project manager model.

(3) A career advancement model that requires appropriate expertise and experience for advancement.

(4) A career advancement model that is more competitive with the private sector and that recognizes both Government and private sector experience.

(5) Appropriate consideration and alignment with the needs and priorities of the Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center, the Assisted Acquisition Centers of Excellence, and acquisition intern programs.

(c) COMBINATION WITH OTHER CADRES PLAN.—The Director may combine the plan required by subsection (a) with the IT Acquisition Cadres Strategic Plan required under section 1704(j) of title 41, United States Code, as added by section 411.

SEC. 413. PERSONNEL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE ACQUISITION OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall develop policy and guidance for agencies to develop a program to recognize excellent performance by Federal Government employees and teams of such employees in the acquisition of information systems and information technology for the agency.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The program referred to in subsection (a) shall, to the extent practicable—

(1) obtain objective outcome measures; and

(2) include procedures for—

(A) the nomination of Federal Government employees and teams of such employees for eligibility for recognition under the program; and

(B) the evaluation of nominations for recognition under the program by 1 or more agency panels of individuals from Government, academia, and the private sector who have such expertise, and are appointed in such a manner, as the Director of the Office of Personal Management shall establish for purposes of the program.

(c) AWARD OF CASH BONUSES AND OTHER INCENTIVES.—In carrying out the program referred to in subsection (a), the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, shall establish policies and guidance for agencies to reward any Federal Government employee or teams of such employees recognized pursuant to the program—

(1) with a cash bonus, to the extent that the performance of such individual or team warrants the award of such bonus and is authorized by any provision of law;

(2) through promotions and other nonmonetary awards;

(3) by publicizing—

(A) acquisition accomplishments by individual employees; and

(B) the tangible end benefits that resulted from such accomplishments, as appropriate; and

(4) through other awards, incentives, or bonuses that the head of the agency considers appropriate.

TITLE V—ADDITIONAL REFORMS

SEC. 501. MAXIMIZING THE BENEFIT OF THE FEDERAL STRATEGIC SOURCING INITIATIVE.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy shall prescribe regulations providing that when the Federal Government makes a purchase of services and supplies offered under the Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative (managed by the Office of Federal Procurement Policy) but such Initiative is not used, the contract file for the purchase shall include a brief analysis of the comparative value, including price and nonprice factors, between the services and supplies offered under such Initiative and services and supplies offered under the source or sources used for the purchase.

SEC. 502. GOVERNMENTWIDE SOFTWARE PURCHASING PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of General Services, in collaboration with the Department of Defense, shall identify and develop a strategic sourcing initiative to enhance Governmentwide acquisition, shared use, and dissemination of software, as well as compliance with end user license agreements.

(b) EXAMINATION OF METHODS.—In developing the initiative under subsection (a), the Administrator shall examine the use of realistic and effective demand aggregation models supported by actual agency commitment to use the models, and supplier relationship management practices, to more effectively govern the Government's acquisition of information technology.

(c) GOVERNMENTWIDE USER LICENSE AGREEMENT.—The Administrator, in developing the initiative under subsection (a), shall allow for the purchase of a license agreement that is available for use by all executive agencies as one user to the maximum extent practicable and as appropriate.

SEC. 503. PROMOTING TRANSPARENCY OF BLANKET PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

(a) PRICE INFORMATION TO BE TREATED AS PUBLIC INFORMATION.—The final negotiated price offered by an awardee of a blanket purchase agreement shall be treated as public information.

(b) PUBLICATION OF BLANKET PURCHASE AGREEMENT INFORMATION.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Administrator of General Services shall make available to the public a list of all blanket purchase agreements entered into by Federal agencies under its Federal Supply Schedules contracts and the prices associated with those blanket purchase agreements. The list and price information shall be updated at least once every 6 months.

SEC. 504. ADDITIONAL SOURCE SELECTION TECHNIQUE IN SOLICITATIONS.

Section 3306(d) of title 41, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by striking ''or'' at the end of paragraph (1);

(2) by striking the period and inserting ''; or'' at the end of paragraph (2); and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) stating in the solicitation that the award will be made using a fixed price technical competition, under which all offerors compete solely on nonprice factors and the fixed award price is pre-announced in the solicitation.''.

SEC. 505. ENHANCED TRANSPARENCY IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS.

(a) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ABOUT IT INVESTMENTS.—Section 11302(c) of title 40, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph:

''(2) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—The Director shall make available to the public the cost, schedule, and performance data for all of the IT investments listed in subparagraph (B), notwithstanding whether the investments are for new IT acquisitions or for operations and maintenance of existing IT.

''(B) INVESTMENTS LISTED.—The investments listed in this subparagraph are the following:

''(i) At least 80 percent (by dollar value) of all information technology investments Governmentwide.

''(ii) At least 60 percent (by dollar value) of all information technology investments in each Federal agency listed in section 901(b) of title 31.

''(iii) Every major information technology investment (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget) in each Federal agency listed in section 901(b) of title 31.

''(C) QUARTERLY REVIEW AND CERTIFICATION.—For each investment listed in subparagraph (B), the agency Chief Information Officer and the program manager of the investment within the agency shall certify, at least once every quarter, that the information is current, accurate, and reflects the risks associated with each listed investment. The Director shall conduct quarterly reviews and publicly identify agencies with an incomplete certification or with significant data quality issues.

''(D) CONTINUOUS AVAILABILITY.—The information required under subparagraph (A), in its most updated form, shall be publicly available at all times.

''(E) WAIVER OR LIMITATION AUTHORITY.—The applicability of subparagraph (A) may be waived or the extent of the information may be limited—

''(i) by the Director, with respect to IT investments Governmentwide; and

''(ii) by the Chief Information Officer of a Federal agency, with respect to IT investments in that agency;

if the Director or the Chief Information Officer, as the case may be, determines that such a waiver or limitation is in the national security interests of the United States.''.

(b) ADDITIONAL REPORT REQUIREMENTS.—Paragraph (3) of section 11302(c) of such title, as redesignated by subsection (a), is amended by adding at the end the following: ''The report shall include an analysis of agency trends reflected in the performance risk information required in paragraph (2).''.

SEC. 506. ENHANCED COMMUNICATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council shall prescribe a regulation making clear that agency acquisition personnel are permitted and encouraged to engage in responsible and constructive exchanges with industry, so long as those exchanges are consistent with existing law and regulation and do not promote an unfair competitive advantage to particular firms.

SEC. 507. CLARIFICATION OF CURRENT LAW WITH RESPECT TO TECHNOLOGY NEUTRALITY IN ACQUISITION OF SOFTWARE.

(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this section is to establish guidance and processes to clarify that software acquisitions by the Federal Government are to be made using merit-based requirements development and evaluation processes that promote procurement choices—

(1) based on performance and value, including the long-term value proposition to the Federal Government;

(2) free of preconceived preferences based on how technology is developed, licensed, or distributed; and

(3) generally including the consideration of proprietary, open source, and mixed source software technologies.

(b) TECHNOLOGY NEUTRALITY.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to modify the Federal Government's long-standing policy of following technology-neutral principles and practices when selecting and acquiring information technology that best fits the needs of the Federal Government.

(c) GUIDANCE.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director, in consultation with the Chief Information Officers Council, shall issue guidance concerning the technology-neutral procurement and use of software within the Federal Government.

(d) MATTERS COVERED.—In issuing guidance under subsection (c), the Director shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Guidance to clarify that the preference for commercial items in section 3307 of title 41, United States Code, includes proprietary, open source, and mixed source software that meets the definition of the term ''commercial item'' in section 103 of title 41, United States Code, including all such software that is used for non-Government purposes and is licensed to the public.

(2) Guidance regarding the conduct of market research to ensure the inclusion of proprietary, open source, and mixed source software options.

(3) Guidance to define Governmentwide standards for security, redistribution, indemnity, and copyright in the acquisition, use, release, and collaborative development of proprietary, open source, and mixed source software.

(4) Guidance for the adoption of available commercial practices to acquire proprietary, open source, and mixed source software for widespread Government use, including issues such as security and redistribution rights.

(5) Guidance to establish standard service level agreements for maintenance and support for proprietary, open source, and mixed source software products widely adopted by the Government, as well as the development of Governmentwide agreements that contain standard and widely applicable contract provisions for ongoing maintenance and development of software.

(6) Guidance on the role and use of the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center, authorized under section 11501 of title 40, United States Code (as added by section 401), for acquisition of proprietary, open source, and mixed source software.

(e) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2 years after the issuance of the guidance required by subsection (b), the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the relevant congressional committees a report containing—

(1) an assessment of the effectiveness of the guidance;

(2) an identification of barriers to widespread use by the Federal Government of specific software technologies; and

(3) such legislative recommendations as the Comptroller General considers appropriate to further the purposes of this section.

SEC. 508. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

Except as provided in section 11501(i) of title 40, United States Code, as added by section 401, no additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act and the amendments made by this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized or appropriated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

This bill, the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act, or FITARA, is a slightly modified version of the one that left committee. It was changed only with my cosponsor's concurrence in order to make it more likely to easily pass both bodies. This is, in fact, substantially the same bill, as amended, as the full House voted last year to incorporate in the House version of the defense authorization bill.

H.R. 1232 reforms governmentwide the process by which the government annually acquires and employs, roughly, $81 billion of Federal information technology. To quote President Obama on November 14, 2013: ''One of the things the Federal Government does not do well is information technology procurement.''

Now, that was profound because, in the fifth year of his Presidency, it is very clear that the President has realized that this is a monumental task, one inherited by him, not one created by him.

There are systematic problems in the way that we procure IT, including the nature of the history of individuals at all levels thinking they can buy something, and often they can, but too often our committee sees and reviews billion-dollar writeoffs of IT programs in which you cannot find out who was in charge, in which you cannot find out how they went on so long, and the hardest thing to find out is why they don't work at the end of $1 billion worth of ''in and out'' of House production. Indeed, industry experts estimate that as much as 25 percent of the over $80 billion annual expenditure is mismanaged or is attributable to duplicative investments or simply doesn't come to be used.

We need to enhance the best value to the taxpayer. More importantly, good software saves billions of dollars and countless lives and countless hours if it works. Bad or poorly done software can frustrate the American public and can often deprive them of the very product or service that they expect to receive.

When this bill was originally envisioned, written, and passed out of our committee, no one had heard of the healthcare.gov Web site. Our committee, in fact, had looked at countless other failures within the IT procurement community, including ones at the

Department of Defense and others, including ones that occurred under previous Presidents. We had determined, along with Mr. CONNOLLY, that there were a number of areas in which we needed to make fundamental change. So, although the American people can certainly see the launch of healthcare.gov as a poster child for not done on time, not, perhaps, done on a budget that we would be proud of and certainly something for which you could not find the responsible parties, even when you called them before your committee, let us make this clear: this bill is not about one failure. It is about a governmentwide, longstanding failure that predates this administration.

Among the things that FITARA will do is to create a clear line of responsibility, authority, and accountability over IT investment and management decisions by empowering agency CIOs; creating an operational framework to dramatically enhance the government's ability to procure commonly used IT faster, cheaper, and smarter; and strengthening the IT acquisition workforce. I want to reiterate this, that this is the Federal IT acquisition force. There can be no better investment than to make sure the people whom you trust the most for procuring IT, both from a standpoint of functionality and security, be a well-trained workforce, which is part of what we want to make sure we have.

FITARA accelerates and consolidates and optimizes the organization of government's proliferating data centers, something that my colleague from Virginia has worked on tirelessly. It increases the transparency of IT investment scorecards by requiring 80 percent of governmentwide IT spending to be covered by public Web sites called ''IT dashboards,'' and it ensures procurement decisions give due consideration to all technologies, including open source. I might note that for the $677 million that initially was spent on healthcare.gov, some of the areas in which the code worked was proven open source technology that was made available.

The discussion draft of this bill was first posted by our committee on its Web site 18 months ago. We held two full committee hearings on the bill, and the language that has evolved through the course of several rewrites and extensive feedback by the contracting and technology communities and experts inside and outside of the government has given us the legislation you see before you today. This is a significant and timely reform that enhances both defense and nondefense procurement, and I urge all Members to support the bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

The Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act, FITARA, would make a number of improvements to the management and the acquisition of IT systems in the Federal Government. I think if we were to summarize what this bill does we would have to use the words ''effective'' and ''efficient.'' We would have to use them over and over again, and we would also say that we are going to do better.

It would enhance the authority of the Federal Chief Information Officers, require agencies to optimize the functioning of Federal data centers, eliminate duplicative IT acquisition practices, and strengthen the Federal IT acquisition workforce. These reforms are needed to ensure that the Federal Government makes effective and efficient investments in information technology.

I want to commend Representative ISSA, the chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, for the bipartisan approach to this legislation. We had two full committee hearings on the concepts of this bill. The draft of the bill was made available for comment prior to the committee's considering it, and we really do appreciate that.

I also want to recognize Representative GERALD CONNOLLY, the ranking member of the Government Operations Subcommittee, for his critical work on drafting this legislation on technology issues generally. He has made himself an expert in this area, and we are the beneficiaries of that expertise. A significant portion of the legislation before us is based on Ranking Member CONNOLLY's own bill to consolidate Federal data centers.

Last year, the GAO issued its most recent high-risk report, which lists several IT projects as being among the Federal Government's highest-risk investments. For instance, a contract to streamline the Army's inventory of weapons systems is more than 12 years behind schedule and is almost $4 billion over budget. Effective oversight is one of the best weapons against this kind of wasteful spending. Congress has a duty to conduct oversight as well as the obligation to give agencies the tools they need to conduct their own oversight and improve their processes.

Agencies need more well-trained acquisition management professionals to effectively oversee complex systems acquisitions and to ensure that the government is a smart and diligent consumer. If you do not have the people who have the expertise who are doing the acquisitions, you often run into major problems. As has often been said, there is nothing like not knowing what you don't know. The Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act addresses this need by requiring OMB to submit a 5-year plan to develop, strengthen, and solidify IT acquisition cadres.

I understand that the administration has some concerns with this legislation we are considering today, so it is my hope that we can address those concerns as the bill moves forward in the legislative process.

Again, I want to thank Chairman ISSA for all of his hard work and Mr. CONNOLLY for all of his. I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I now yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ), a man who has worked diligently on the subcommittee to ensure that national security includes Internet security.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. I thank the chairman for his good work on this. Without Chairman ISSA's leadership on this issue, we would not have this bill here today. I appreciate his work and dedication and passion on this issue. I appreciate Mr. CUMMINGS. I also appreciate Mr. CONNOLLY and the good work he does on this topic.

Mr. Speaker, I hope what people see here is a bipartisan approach to something that is a very large problem. There is a great imperative that we deal with this and deal with it right away. The Federal Government spent more than $600 billion over the past decade on information technology, and we spend, roughly, $80 billion a year just on IT. It is a critical component to making sure that we do have an effective and responsive government.

Now, of the $80 billion or so that is spent each year, about one-third is spent on new procurement projects, and about two-thirds is spent on the operation and maintenance of existing or obsolete systems. It takes so much more energy and personnel to go through obsolete systems than it does to quickly replace with software and hardware and personnel new information technology systems that will make our government more responsive and more effective. There is nothing more frustrating than trying to work with an operating system that is no longer supported by the company that even makes the operating system. We have heard horror stories of people working on DOS operating systems. They are still looking at green screens, for goodness sakes. This is an imperative, and we have to make sure it is prioritized.

□ 1530

Some industry experts have estimated that as much as 70 percent of new IT acquisitions fail or require rebaselining. The Technology CEO Council, made up of top industry experts, estimates that $20 billion of the $80 billion we spend is wasted every year on mismanaged and duplicative IT programs.

The GAO has estimated that the Departments of Treasury, Agriculture, Energy, and State spend well over 80 percent of their IT budgets on operations and maintenance of potentially obsolete systems.

We can do better on this. We are united in a bipartisan way. I encourage my colleagues to pass this bill.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Chairman ISSA and his leadership on this issue, and I urge a ''yes'' vote on this bill.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 6 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY), a man who has

worked very hard on this legislation with Chairman ISSA.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank my good friend and our distinguished ranking member of the committee, Mr. CUMMINGS, for his graciousness and generosity. He has been a great leader and a great mentor in our committee. I also thank the distinguished chairman, Mr. ISSA, for his leadership on this legislation. I have been proud to cosponsor and coauthor this bill with him.

In the 21st century, Mr. Speaker, effective governance is inextricably linked with how well government leverages technology to serve its citizens. Yet our current Federal laws governing IT management and procurement are antiquated and out of step with technological change and growth and yield poor results.

Far too often, cumbersome bureaucracy stifles innovation and prevents government from efficiently buying and deploying cutting-edge technology. Program failure and cost overruns plague the vast majority of major Federal IT investments.

As the distinguished chairman indicated, if only the rollout of the health care Web site were a unique incident. Unfortunately, it actually characterizes most major Federal IT procurement rollouts.

Some Federal managers report as much as 47 percent of their budgets are spent on maintaining inadequate or antiquated IT platforms. That is 47 percent.

In recent decades, taxpayers have been forced to foot the bill for massive IT program failures that ring up staggeringly high costs but exhibit astonishingly poor performance. For example, the Air Force invested 6 years in a modernization effort that cost more than $1 billion but failed to deliver a usable product, prompting the Assistant Secretary to state:

> I am personally appalled at the limited capabilities that program has produced relative to that amount of investment.

This status quo is neither acceptable nor sustainable.

Again, I want to thank Chairman ISSA for working with me in a productive manner to develop the bipartisan Issa-Connolly Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act, or FITARA. This bipartisan legislation seeks to comprehensively streamline and strengthen the Federal IT acquisition process and promote the adoption of the best practices from the technology community.

The reform measure before us recognizes that effective Federal IT procurement reform must start with leadership and accountability. It is absolutely essential that a department's top leadership understands how critical effective IT investments are to an agency's operations and ability to carry out its future mission.

We must elevate and enhance the prestige and, more importantly, the authorities of CIOs across the Federal Government to hold them accountable and to give them the flexibility to effectively manage an agency's IT portfolio. Agency heads need talented leaders to serve as their primary advisers on IT management; to recruit and retain talented IT staff, as the distinguished chairman has indicated; and to oversee critical IT investments across the organization. Title I of our legislation would accomplish this while also avoiding one-size-fits-all solutions by allowing agencies significant discretion in implementing the various aspects of this new law.

Our bill would also accelerate data center optimization, as the distinguished ranking member indicated, and provide agencies with flexibility to leverage efficient cloud services and strengthen the accountability and transparency of Federal IT programs.

If enacted, 80 percent of the approximately $80 billion spent annually on Federal IT investment would be required to be posted on the public IT Dashboard, compared to the 50 percent or less that characterizes that activity today.

Strengthening the transparency requirements is an urgent and much-needed reform in light of the most recent January 2014 GAO report that revealed the IT Dashboard has not been updated for 15 of the last 24 months. This finding is as astonishing as it is unacceptable.

Fortunately, a bipartisan consensus is forming around the urgent need to further streamline and strengthen how the Federal Government acquires and deploys information technology. President Obama has embraced Federal IT procurement reform, and a number of agencies are already taking a lead in the area.

Now is the time, Mr. Speaker, to ensure reforms are adopted government-wide and carry the force of reform law. I urge all of my colleagues to join us in this bipartisan effort in supporting this important and urgently needed reform.

In the 21st century, effective governance is inextricably linked with how well government leverages technology to serve its citizens.

Yet, our current Federal laws governing Federal IT management remain out of step with technological change and growth, with bureaucracy stifling innovation and preventing government from efficiently buying and deploying cutting edge technology.

Simply put, today Federal IT acquisition is often a cumbersome, bureaucratic, and wasteful exercise—characterized by a Federal Government that has no idea what technology it needs, struggles to manage what it has, and consequently wastes billions of taxpayer dollars on failed IT investments.

In recent decades, taxpayers have been forced to foot the bill for massive IT program failures that ring up staggeringly high costs, but exhibit astonishingly poor performance.

Program failure and cost overruns still plague the vast majority of major Federal IT investments, while Federal managers' report that 47 percent of their budget is spent on maintaining antiquated and inadequate IT platforms.

The annual price tag of this wasteful spending on Federal IT programs is estimated to add up to approximately $20 billion.

The Air Force invested six years in a modernization effort that cost more than $1 billion, but failed to deliver a usable product, prompting its Assistant Secretary to state, quote "I am personally appalled at the limited capabilities that program has produced relative to that amount of investment."

Of course, failing mission-critical IT investments do not only waste taxpayer dollars, but they jeopardize our Nation's safety, security, and economy.

From malfunctioning Census handheld computers that threatened to undermine a critical constitutional responsibility . . . to a promised electronic border fence that never materialized . . . time and time again, agency missions have been sabotaged by failed IT acquisitions and gross mismanagement.

This status quo is unacceptable and unsustainable.

The question facing us today is how can we modernize an IT procurement process designed for the 20th Century to meet the growing technology demands of the 21st?

There are no quick fixes or legislative silver bullets. However, I strongly believe that if Congress can limit partisan posturing, we may finally have an opportunity to address the core problem at the heart of the HealthCare.gov challenge—our Nation's broken Federal IT procurement system.

I want to thank Chairman ISSA for working with me in a productive manner to develop the bipartisan Issa-Connolly Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act, also known as FITARA.

Our bipartisan legislation seeks to comprehensively streamline and strengthen the Federal IT acquisition process and promote the adoption of best practices from the technology community.

We have solicited extensive input from all stakeholders to refine and improve our bill in an open and transparent manner.

The resulting Issa-Connolly reform measure recognizes that effective Federal IT procurement reform must start with leadership and accountability.

It is absolutely vital that a Department's top leadership understands how critical effective IT investments are to an agency's operations and ability to carry out its mission.

After reviewing the findings of extensive oversight reviews, and feedback from those in the trenches, I believe we must elevate and enhance the prestige, and more importantly, the authorities, of CIOs across the Federal Government to hold them accountable for effectively managing an agency's IT portfolio.

Agency heads must have talented leaders to serve as primary advisors on IT management . . . recruit and retain talented IT staff . . . and oversee critical IT investments.

Title I of FITARA would accomplish this, while also avoiding "one-size-fits-all" solutions by allowing agencies significant discretion in implementing the law.

In many respects, FITARA simply provides the force of law behind the August 2011 memorandum authored by then-OMB Director Jacob Lew, which announced that the Administration was committed to, quote:

> "changing the role of Agency Chief Information Officers away from just policy-making and infrastructure maintenance, to encompass true portfolio management for all IT.
>
> This will enable CIOs to focus on delivering IT solutions that support the mission and

business effectiveness of their agencies and overcome bureaucratic impediments to deliver enterprise-wide solutions.''

More than two years has passed since that policy memorandum was distributed to agencies, and it has become clear that efforts to reform IT through Administrative actions alone will not suffice.

In fact, if one takes the time to analyze FITARA vis-à-vis existing Administration IT initiatives, one will find that our bipartisan bill is consistent with, and seeks to build on, the nascent Federal IT initiatives that have emerged over the past five years, including those in the 25 Point Plan.

For example, the Issa-Connolly FITARA would enhance the CIO Council's role, tasking it with leading enterprise-wide portfolio management, and coordinating shared services and shared platforms across government.

This bipartisan bill would also empower agencies to eliminate duplicative and wasteful IT contracts that have proliferated for commonly-used, IT Commodity-like investments, such as e-mail.

In this era of austerity, agencies cannot afford to spend precious dollars and time creating duplicative, wasteful contracts for products and licenses they already own. In addition to improving how the government procures IT, this amendment would also enhance how the government deploys these tools.

Our bill would accelerate data center optimization, provide agencies with flexibility to leverage efficient cloud services, and strengthen the accountability and transparency of Federal IT programs.

If enacted, 80 percent of the approximately $80 billion annual Federal IT investment would be required to be posted on the public IT Dashboard, compared to the 50 percent coverage that exists today.

Strengthening the transparency requirements of the IT Dashboard is an urgent and much needed reform in light of the recent January 2014 GAO report that revealed the IT Dashboard has not been updated for 15 of the past 24 months! This finding was as astonishing as it was unacceptable.

The IT Dashboard was launched in 2009 with great fanfare, and to this day, OMB continues to claim that, quote ''The IT Dashboard gives the public access to the same tools and analysis that the government uses to oversee the performance of the Federal IT investments.''

Clearly providing the public with accurate and updated Federal IT investment performance data for only 9 months out of a 2-year period fails to give average citizens access to the same analysis used by agencies.

It certainly undermines OMB's claim that the IT Dashboard was launched to, quote shine ''light onto the performance and spending of IT investments,'' by ensuring that the public has access to data indicating not only whether a project is over budget or behind schedule, but providing specific dollars figures and dates.

Consistent with the principle that public contracts are public documents, our amendment also strengthens transparency in regard to the final negotiated price a company charges a Federal agency for a good or service.

Today, far too many agencies negotiate blanket purchase agreements in silos, without any knowledge that another agency has already negotiated a BPA with the same exact vendor, for the same exact product, but at a different price.

Nearly two decades has passed since the Information Technology Management Reform Act and the Federal Acquisition Reform Act were enacted through the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996—reforms that are better known today as the foundational ''Clinger-Cohen Act.''

Fortunately, a bipartisan consensus is finally forming around the urgent need to further streamline and strengthen how the Federal Government acquires and deploys IT. President Obama has embraced Federal IT procurement reform and several agencies are already taking the lead in this area.

Now is the time to ensure reforms are adopted government-wide and carry the force of law.

The bipartisan Issa-Connolly Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act will enhance the statutory framework established by Clinger-Cohen to create an efficient and effective Federal IT procurement system that best serves agencies, industry, and most importantly, the American taxpayer.

I urge all my colleagues to join me in supporting this important and urgently needed bipartisan reform measure.

IT ALLIANCE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR,
Washington, DC, February 25, 2014.

Re H.R. 1232, the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA)

Hon. DARRELL ISSA,
Chairman, House Oversight & Government Reform, Washington, DC.

Hon. GERRY CONNOLLY,
House Oversight & Government Reform, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ISSA AND REPRESENTATIVE CONNOLLY: On behalf of the Information Technology Alliance for Public Sector (IT Alliance), I would like to thank you for your continued engagement with industry regarding the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA). We believe that these discussions have led to many improvements to the legislation over the past year. We look forward to continuing this dialogue as the bill advances to the Senate.

The IT Alliance recognizes the importance of revisiting and revising federal information technology management and related acquisition processes, and we appreciate the outreach efforts of the bill's cosponsors and their staffs. We greatly appreciate the additional changes recently made to the bill that include the clarification of applicability to the Department of Defense regarding CIO authorities, the added ''optional-use'' text around the Acquisition Centers of Excellence, and the removal of the term ''low-cost'' from the bill. While we still hold some reservations regarding the Federal Infrastructure and Common Application Collaboration Center, we believe making the program into a pilot allows agencies more flexibility. Additionally, we continue to support many of the provisions and authorities in the bill:

Enhanced Authorities for the Civilian Chief Information Officers (CIOs)—The IT Alliance supports enhanced authority for ClOs, including consolidation of the position to improve management of IT investment decisions, reduce redundancy, and drive efficiency across the entire department. ARWG further supports provisions establishing direct executive agency personnel engagement in the IT investment strategy for the agency.

Multi-Year Revolving Funds for IT Investment—The IT Alliance strongly supports the funding availability for agencies wishing to transition to the cloud. We see this as a significant improvement that will allow the government acquisition of technology to keep pace with innovation, and to provide more flexibility in budget models than currently exists. We further believe this flexibility should be extended to all IT investments.

Transition to the Cloud—The IT Alliance supports the provisions that promote the government's transition to a cloud services environment. Industry has emphasized the need for government to utilize the most innovative advancements in information technology to increase efficiency and reduce costs, and transitioning to the cloud will provide the government with more reliable, more affordable and more flexible access to IT infrastructure than currently exists.

Data Center Optimization—The IT Alliance supports provisions that seek to create effective data center optimization plans. These plans would establish metrics for optimizing data center usage and drive efficiencies in their utilization, while also encouraging the wider use of commercial data centers and commercial cloud services. The bill seeks to eliminate non-optimized data centers, and, subject to appropriations, use the savings achieved to promote other IT capabilities and services throughout the agency involved.

Strengthening the IT Acquisition Workforce—The IT Alliance is also very supportive of provisions that enhance the IT acquisition workforce's capabilities. These provisions, particularly regarding the development of a career path for IT program management, represent a first step to meaningful improvements in the management of IT investments.

Enhanced Communication with Industry—ARWG supports the provisions that encourage a more robust dialogue between industry and government. This promotes federal acquisition personnel having responsible and constructive dialogues with industry and we could not encourage this point more.

Thank you again for your dedication to improving the way the federal government procures information technologies, and for recognizing the need for management, workforce, and technical solutions. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your colleagues as it advances to the Senate to further improve this important bill. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Erica McCann of the ITAPS staff if we can be of further assistance.

Respectfully submitted,
A.R. ''TREY'' HODGKINS III,
Senior Vice President, Public Sector.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, can I inquire as to how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 12 minutes

remaining. The gentleman from Maryland has 11½ minutes remaining.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

My partners in this are sitting on the other side of the aisle. But this committee has come together to look at a problem as simple as chief information officer doesn't mean ''chief.'' It is simply a hollow title.

This bill, more than anything else to the American people, means that for every piece of major IT procurement, there will be a chief information officer; and that CIO will have budget authority and be held accountable, but also be given the ability to make those decisions, including pulling the ''stop'' button on a bad piece of legislation.

So the title of CIO and CTO and some of the other titles need to mean something. Our committee unanimously believes that if you are to be a chief, you have to be able to tell the Indians what to do. You can't be a chief in name only, and when something doesn't work, find yourself without the ability to call ''halt,'' to go directly to the agency head or do the other things we would expect the title ''chief'' to mean.

So, for that reason, I believe it has united a committee behind something that must pass today, go to the Senate and be taken up and become law, if we are going to begin regaining the American people's confidence in our ability to procure large information systems.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I agree with Chairman ISSA. If we are going to have a chief information officer, they need to be what we say they are. They need to have the power to effect change when change is appropriate. They have to have the power to make sure decisions are made to carry out the issues that come up with IT in an effective and efficient manner. I think this legislation is a giant step in the right direction.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would hope and ask all Members of Congress to vote in favor of this legislation. As I often say, we can always do better. I think that this is one of those times when, through a bipartisan effort, we are making a major statement that we are going to do better.

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

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

In closing, first, I urge all Members to vote on this important legislation to send a strong message that this is a do-something Congress when it comes to problems that have been around for a very long time.

Secondly, I would like to take a moment, in a bit of personal privilege, to say to the American workforce that work for the Federal Government that, in every investigation by our committee, we have found in every failed project there were legions of good Federal employees who recognized the problem, sent letters, and who tried to have a program that was not going right to go right or go better.

It is not for lack of many, many in the Federal workforce who are doing their job as best they can. It is for lack of a consolidated and predictable chain of command. It is for lack of the ability to have somebody know they are in charge, bear the full weight, and be qualified.

I have no doubt that, upon enactment of this law, the Federal workforce will begin to breathe a breath of fresh air to know that they are being empowered to do the work they so desperately want to do, and that the tools are going to be added for them and the titles will become a title earned and then used wisely.

Seldom do we spend a lot of time on the House floor talking about how great the Federal workforce is. We are talking about monumental failures. Let's understand that it is not for lack of good programmers, it is not for lack of good contractors, and it is not for lack of well-meaning and dedicated Federal workers that we come today. It is for the need to organize them in a way in which we believe they can be successful. And that is the other part of our committee. We are the Committee on Government and Oversight Reform, and today is a structural reform in how we purchase information technology.

For that, I want to thank my partners on the other side of the aisle because we have been right next to each other on this all the way. I particularly thank Mr. CONNOLLY, who has put his staff and his own personal time into every aspect of this, and who also added his earlier legislation that allows us to bring about the necessary consolidation of duplicative centers spread around the country. They are simply a waste of energy and a waste of software power.

So I see this as a win-win, one in which Republicans and Democrats have come together in a Congress that does not have a great reputation but, on occasion, does great things.

I urge support for this, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1232 because it begins to fix a broken procurement system that has been on the GAO's "high–risk" list since the early 1990's.

Federal IT procurement has been a black hole of taxpayer dollars long before the deeply flawed rollout of Healthcare.gov. During my service on the House Intelligence Committee from 2003 to 2011, there were billions of dollars spent on IT projects that failed, without a shred of work product recoverable for the taxpayer.

H.R. 1232 will go a long way toward addressing these problems by empowering agency CIOs and developing new IT acquisition guidelines and best practices. This bill is a strong start but I think there's more that can be done.

Congressman Connolly and I have worked together to draft complementary legislation to FITARA, called the Reforming Federal Procurement of Information Technology Act. Our bill would create a new, high–level office of IT experts in the White House charged with reviewing major federal IT projects before they get off track.

Our bill would also make it easier for small, innovative businesses to compete for federal projects by simplifying the contracting process. The Federal Acquisition Regulation is 1,900 pages long, and some agencies have a supplement that's an additional 1,000 pages. This rewards incumbent companies familiar with the rules and prevents open competition and innovation among vendors.

I applaud Congressmen ISSA and CONNOLLY for working together on this important legislation, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1232, 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.

TAXPAYERS RIGHT-TO-KNOW ACT

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1423) to provide taxpayers with an annual report disclosing the cost and performance of Government programs and areas of duplication among them, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1423

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 ''Taxpayers Right-To-Know Act''.

SEC. 2. COST AND PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS.

(a) AMENDMENT.—Section 1122(a) of title 31, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(3) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Information for each program described under paragraph (1) shall include the following to be updated not less than annually:

''(i) The total administrative cost of the program for the previous fiscal year.

''(ii) The expenditures for services for the program for the previous fiscal year.

''(iii) An estimate of the number of clients served by the program and beneficiaries who received assistance under the program (if applicable) for the previous fiscal year.

''(iv) An estimate of, for the previous fiscal year—

''(I) the number of full-time Federal employees who administer the program; and

''(II) the number of full-time employees whose salary is paid in part or full by the Federal Government through a grant or contract, a subaward of a grant or contract, a cooperative agreement, or another form of financial award or assistance who administer or assist in administering the program.

''(v) An identification of the specific statute that authorizes the program, including whether such authorization is expired.

''(vi) Any finding of duplication or overlap identified by internal review, an Inspector

General, the Government Accountability Office, or other report to the agency about the program.

''(vii) Any program performance reviews (including program performance reports required under section 1116).

''(B) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph:

''(i) ADMINISTRATIVE COST.—The term 'administrative cost' has the meaning as determined by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget under section 504(b)(2) of Public Law 111–85 (31 U.S.C. 1105 note), except the term shall also include, for purposes of that section and this paragraph, with respect to an agency—

''(I) costs incurred by the agency as well as costs incurred by grantees, subgrantees, and other recipients of funds from a grant program or other program administered by the agency; and

''(II) expenses related to personnel salaries and benefits, property management, travel, program management, promotion, reviews and audits, case management, and communication about, promotion of, and outreach for programs and program activities administered by the agency.

''(ii) SERVICES.—The term 'services' has the meaning provided by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and shall be limited to only activities, assistance, and aid that provide a direct benefit to a recipient, such as the provision of medical care, assistance for housing or tuition, or financial support (including grants and loans).''.

(b) EXPIRED GRANT FUNDING.—Not later than February 1 of each fiscal year, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall publish on the public website of the Office of Management and Budget the total amount of undisbursed grant funding remaining in grant accounts for which the period of availability to the grantee has expired.

SEC. 3. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO IDENTIFICATION, CONSOLIDATION, AND ELIMINATION OF DUPLICATIVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS.

Section 21 of the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (31 U.S.C. 712 note) is amended by inserting ''(a)'' before the first sentence and by adding at the end the following:

''(b) The Comptroller General shall maintain and provide regular updates, on not less than an annual basis to a publicly available website that tracks the status of responses by Departments and the Congress to suggested actions that the Comptroller General has previously identified in annual reports under subsection (a). The status of these suggested actions shall be tracked for an appropriate period to be determined by the Comptroller General. The requirements of this subsection shall apply during the effective period of subsection (a).''.

SEC. 4. CLASSIFIED INFORMATION.

Nothing in this Act shall, or the amendments made by this Act, be construed to require the disclosure of classified information.

SEC. 5. REGULATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall prescribe regulations to implement this Act, and the amendments made by this Act.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—This Act, and the amendments made by this Act, shall be implemented not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.—No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act, or the amendments made by this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) and the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I believe that the American people should know what their government spends and what their government does. It is a reasonable request to be able to make of a government that is designed to serve the people. The people should be able to look back and be able to evaluate, Is this government serving the people, and are they doing it in such away that is actually efficient and making a difference?

Every company in America can tell you what their staff is spending their time on and what the cost of their activities are, how many customers they have, and whether they are successful at reaching their basic goals. But we do not have that within the Federal Government.

H.R. 1423 asks just a few specific things of our government to be able to delineate, again, what every business in America does. It is just six specific things, such as the name of the program, the basic description of that program, the administrative costs of that program, the number of staff for that program, the number of beneficiaries of that program, the statutory authority for that program, and, very importantly, how that program is actually evaluated and what are the metrics to determine if this program is getting the job done that it needs to get done.

We have started in the right direction. OMB is working to comply with the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010 by publicly listing all of the programs that the government administers and their performance goals, but that information is incomplete.

H.R. 1423 fills the gaps in the information provided to the public by requiring OMB to include such vital information as the administrative costs and expenditures of each Federal program, the number of people the program serves, the number of employees working on the program, and where in the statute the program is authorized.

□ 1545

This bill offers a simple list that Congress can use to evaluate Federal programs and to make informed decisions about how to make government work smarter and better. Agencies could cut billions of dollars in costs, without compromising services. In many cases, they could improve their services while we are still saving money to the taxpayer.

If we just cut duplicative administrative costs and eliminate the programs that do not work, we can protect taxpayer dollars. We have an enormous Federal deficit. We should do everything we can to be able to evaluate what we are doing as a government and be able to determine where are we wasting taxpayer dollars. There are not taxpayer dollars left to waste.

Under the bill, any person anywhere in the country can, at any time, access information about the cost, scope, and performance of every Federal program.

H.R. 1423 requires OMB to report publicly any finding of duplication by GAO, an inspector general or any other report. It also requires GAO to maintain a database that tracks how quickly and how well Congress and the administration respond to these findings of duplication.

It may come as a surprise: Congress occasionally finds duplication and does nothing about it. This would provide the opportunity for the American people to be able to look back and to be able to track, are we doing something about inefficiencies that have already been isolated in government?

The Vice President was asked during the State of the Union, in this very Chamber, by the President of the United States, to begin a study of job training programs. We know there are more than 57 job training programs that already exist across the Federal Government in multiple agencies. The Vice President was asked to be able to locate those programs, evaluate those programs, and to help determine what is the right process forward for those programs.

Now, that is something that we in the House did earlier last year, the SKILLS Act, but it is something that we would welcome participation from the administration on.

I ask the question: Why can't we already do that in every area, not just duplicative job training programs?

We have multiple programs in multiple agencies that are duplicative. Why do we just do it in job training programs?

Let's do it in all of them. This is the beginning of a process to get after that duplication and that waste. No one here, on either side of the aisle, wants to see a program that is unnecessary or ineffective.

Waste in government is not a Democrat or Republican issue; it is a Big Government issue. With a government the size that we have, we have duplication and we have waste. Let's identify it.

The Taxpayers Right-to-Know Act will ensure we do that. I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I remind my colleagues that multiple groups have already leaned into this bill to say, please pass this, including the Citizens Against Government Waste, the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Council, and the National Taxpayers Union.

America is watching us. Let's deal with our inefficiency.

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

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

I wanted to thank Chairman ISSA and the sponsor of this bill, Chairman

Lankford, for working with me to improve this legislation.

I respect the sponsor's goal with his bill, which is to provide taxpayers more information about how their money is being spent by the Federal Government. I think most people don't mind paying taxes, but they want to know that they are spending them and that they are being used in an effective and efficient manner and for the purpose intended.

However, the Congressional Research Service identified multiple areas of potential overlap and duplication between the bill as it was introduced and the current statutory requirements.

For example, the bill, as introduced, would have required each agency to report information on improper payments, but the Improper Payments Information Act already requires agencies to report information on improper payments.

The current bill, as amended, eliminates much of that duplication. This is a much better bill, and I applaud the majority for their work on it.

There is one provision in the Taxpayers Right-to-Know Act that I want to note because I think it will be a real improvement with regard to transparency. The bill would require agencies to report the number of full-time positions that are paid, in full or in part, through a grant or a contract.

We do not currently know how many employees are working for the Federal Government through contracts. This bill would require agencies to disclose this information on an annual basis.

This bill also includes an amendment that was offered by Representative SPEIER during our committee markup to require agencies to report for their programs any findings of duplication or overlap identified by internal review, an inspector general, the Government Accountability Office, or other report to the agency.

This requirement will help agencies keep track of areas of duplication. It also will increase accountability by making this information easier to find for government watchdogs, including Congress.

I appreciate the improvements that have been made to the bill. I appreciate the bipartisan spirit by which we were able to come to the floor today. I intend to support the legislation.

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, let me make one quick comment, then I would like to yield a minute to my colleague.

This does allow us to be able to gather that information. It is a good thing to have the information.

Over the past several years there has been a push to provide greater transparency in the Federal Government, but the difficulty of bits of information scattered in different parts in different reports has forced the need for this; to say, let's put all that data together.

Not only the number of staff and the number of programs and duplication reports, but let's gather that into one readable report so that every American doesn't have to know where to chase down to get bits of information. They can actually go to one spot and be able to look at it, whether it is a watchdog group, Members of Congress, or any citizen at any computer in America, they can be able to do that kind of research.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA).

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I will be brief.

When our committee works together in the way they have, particularly under the leadership of Chairman LANKFORD, we can do some amazing reforms. This is, in fact, more amazing than people might at first gather.

For example, this requires something as simple as to have the Office of Management and Budget report what is called the all-in cost of Federal programs. For too long, the American people have heard about what a program costs, only to find out that if you go through all the various budgets that a particular action is spread about, it might cost five or six times as much.

That kind of single point accountability is just one of the many reasons that this well-thought-out, bipartisan legislation, led by Mr. LANKFORD, really needs to be passed today as part of this package of reforms to get a government accountability to the American people.

I thank the chairman. I thank the ranking member.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I urge all Members to vote in favor of the legislation.

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

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the conversation and the debate today. This is something that Republicans and Democrats can agree on. We should have transparency. Again, this is not a Republican issue or a Democrat issue. This is a size and scope of our government issue.

We have grown extremely large in the Federal Government. We have duplication that none of us can even find, large budget categories with no specific items underneath them to be able to identify how much things cost, what their effectiveness includes.

This is a moment for us to begin to get the details of all these programs that Congress has authorized back to the Congress for us to be able to evaluate their effectiveness.

This is the right move to be able to make in the days ahead, for us to be able to get our arms around an extremely large, extremely complicated budget with a tremendous amount of duplication and waste that we can't find until we shine some light on it through this bill. I urge all Members to be able to support this bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LANKFORD) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1423, 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.

UNLOCKING CONSUMER CHOICE AND WIRELESS COMPETITION ACT

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1123) to promote consumer choice and wireless competition by permitting consumers to unlock mobile wireless devices, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1123

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 ''Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act''.

SEC. 2. REPEAL OF EXISTING RULE AND ADDITIONAL RULEMAKING BY LIBRARIAN OF CONGRESS.

(a) REPEAL AND REPLACE.—As of the date of the enactment of this Act, paragraph (3) of section 201.40(b) of title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, as amended and revised by the Librarian of Congress on October 28, 2012, pursuant to the Librarian's authority under section 1201(a) of title 17, United States Code, shall have no force and effect, and such paragraph shall read, and shall be in effect, as such paragraph was in effect on July 27, 2010.

(b) RULEMAKING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Librarian of Congress, upon the recommendation of the Register of Copyrights, who shall consult with the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information of the Department of Commerce and report and comment on his or her views in making such recommendation, shall determine, consistent with the requirements set forth under section 1201(a)(1) of title 17, United States Code, whether to extend the exemption for the class of works described in section 201.40(b)(3) of title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, as amended by subsection (a), to include any other category of wireless devices in addition to wireless telephone handsets.

(2) TIMING OF RULEMAKING.—(A) If this Act is enacted before June 1, 2014, the determination under paragraph (1) shall be made by not later than the end of the 9-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) If this Act is enacted on or after June 1, 2014, the determination under paragraph (1) shall be made in the first rulemaking

under section 1201(a)(1)(C) of title 17, United States Code, that begins on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) UNLOCKING AT DIRECTION OF OWNER.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Circumvention of a technological measure that restricts wireless telephone handsets or other wireless devices from connecting to a wireless telecommunications network—

(A)(i) as authorized by paragraph (3) of section 201.40(b) of title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, as made effective by subsection (a), and

(ii) as may be extended to other wireless devices pursuant to a determination in the rulemaking conducted under subsection (b), or

(B) as authorized by an exemption adopted by the Librarian of Congress pursuant to a determination made on or after the date of enactment of this Act under section 1201(a)(1)(C) of title 17, United States Code,

may be initiated by the owner of any such handset or other device, by another person at the direction of the owner, or by a provider of a commercial mobile radio service or a commercial mobile data service at the direction of such owner or other person, solely in order to enable such owner or a family member of such owner to connect to a wireless telecommunications network, when such connection is authorized by the operator of such network.

(2) NO BULK UNLOCKING.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to permit the unlocking of wireless handsets or other wireless devices, for the purpose of bulk resale, or to authorize the Librarian of Congress to authorize circumvention for such purpose under this Act, title 17, United States Code, or any other provision of law.

(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Except as provided in subsection (c), nothing in this Act alters, or shall be construed to alter, the authority of the Librarian of Congress under section 1201(a)(1) of title 17, United States Code.

(e) DEFINITIONS.—In this Act:

(1) COMMERCIAL MOBILE DATA SERVICE; COMMERCIAL MOBILE RADIO SERVICE.—The terms ''commercial mobile data service'' and ''commercial mobile radio service'' have the respective meanings given those terms in section 20.3 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, as in effect on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK.—The term ''wireless telecommunications network'' means a network used to provide a commercial mobile radio service or a commercial mobile data service.

(3) WIRELESS TELEPHONE HANDSETS; WIRELESS DEVICES.—The terms ''wireless telephone handset'' and ''wireless device'' mean a handset or other device that operates on a wireless telecommunications network.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman will state his parliamentary inquiry.

Mr. POLIS. I don't believe there is a rule for this bill. Is there a rule for this bill?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair is referring to a standing rule of the House.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I claim the time in opposition.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman from Virginia in favor of the motion?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I am in favor of the motion. I am not opposed to the bill

The SPEAKER pro tempore. On that basis, pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) will control the 20 minutes in opposition.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) is recognized.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. 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 materials on H.R. 1123, currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Last winter, due to an expired exemption to existing law, consumers lost the legal right to unlock their cell phones so that they could use them on a different wireless carrier. Outraged consumers flooded Congress and the White House with complaints over this change in policy that resulted in reduced marketplace competition.

In response to this impact on consumers, a bipartisan group of House Judiciary Committee members introduced H.R. 1123, the Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act. The legislation reinstates the prior exemption to civil and criminal law for unlocking cell phones for personal use. It also creates an expedited process to determine whether this exemption should be extended to other wireless devices such as tablets.

When this legislation is enacted, consumers will be able to go to a kiosk in the mall, get help from a neighbor, or see a wireless carrier to help unlock their cell phone without any risk of legal penalties. This is not the case today, which is why this legislation is necessary.

H.R. 1123 is supported by such diverse groups in the cellular industry, from the large carriers of CTIA to the small carriers of the Competitive Carriers Association.

Although these two groups announced a private sector agreement in December on unlocking based upon this same legislation, that agreement cannot eliminate the potential of civil and criminal sanctions for consumers who unlock their cell phones. So the need for the legislation remains. Even Consumers Union supports this critical legislation.

□ 1600

The committee has been aware of law enforcement concerns regarding the explosive growth in smartphone thefts. Efforts by criminals to undertake bulk unlocking and transfers of stolen phones are a growing concern in America. Smartphones seem to have become crime magnets in many cities across America.

Because the policy issue has always focused on the ability of consumers to unlock their phones, the legislation is similarly focused on individual consumer unlocking without raising law enforcement concerns. Why would it make sense for Congress to enable criminal gangs to more easily make money off stolen phones instead of simply solving the main issue of consumers being able to unlock their own phones?

Some would like this legislation to go even further. However, I hope all can agree that this is a good start and a solid piece of legislation that will empower consumer choice.

I urge my colleagues to support this important proconsumer legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I rise in opposition to the Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act.

I support the sentiment behind this bill, and I support the version that was reported out of the Judiciary Committee. However, unfortunately, an important change that I will discuss to the detriment of this bill was added last week, just prior to this bill being brought to the floor.

The gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) gave some background with regard to why a bill is necessary. Ever since the Library of Congress ruled last year that unlocking your cell phone violates copyright law, there have been a number of us on both sides of the aisle who have worked to ensure that consumers have the right to unlock their wireless devices and use their property as they see fit.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of Congresswoman LOFGREN's bill, the Unlocking Technology Act of 2013, which gives consumers the right to unlock their devices on a permanent basis.

Before I came to Congress, I was an entrepreneur who started a number of businesses, and I understand firsthand the importance of allowing a free market to thrive and to create a positive environment for businesses and consumers alike.

Allowing consumers to unlock their cell phones, which are their own personal property, can spur competition, allowing new start-up carriers to succeed, lowering prices, and increasing service options for all cell phone users.

To be clear, this is a separate issue from being contractually bound to use a certain provider for a certain period of time. Many Americans choose to enter into a long-term contract in exchange for discounts or free cell phones.

That is not the issue being discussed today, and I don't think there is a problem from either side of the aisle about those consensual contracts.

Rather, we are talking about unlocking cell phones that are not contractually bound to a certain service

provider. This has been an issue within our trade agreements.

I have recently drafted bipartisan letters to the United States Trade Representative, with Representative MASSIE, expressing concern that the leaked text of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement would potentially make any permanent fix to unlocking cell phones illegal.

Now, this bill is not a permanent fix. This bill would make clear congressional intent consistent with the optional agreement between the companies that they have reached. However, the last-minute change that was made in this bill, different from the bill that was passed out of committee, puts a real poison pill in this bill for consumer advocates, such as myself.

The bill adds the language that nothing in this subsection shall be construed to permit the unlocking of wireless handsets or other wireless devices for the purpose of bulk resale or to authorize the Librarian of Congress to authorize circumvention for such purpose or any other provision of law.

Now, while this gives, again, at least a patina of deniability that the bill is making a statement in one way or the other, the statement certainly implies that Congress believes that bulk unlocking is, in fact, illegal.

Now, why is bulk unlocking important? When it comes to the actual technical skills necessary, many consumers are not going to be unlocking their phones themselves. There needs to be a market in unlocked phones for consumers to have the full ability and to be empowered to choose the provider of their choice.

This bill does weigh in, with congressional intent, against the creation of a dynamic marketplace that increases consumer choice and options.

I think, without this clause, this was a bill that made it clear that we can't use the Digital Millennium Copyrights Act to interfere with an issue that is unrelated to copyright, but with this clause, it suggests that perhaps the DMCA's clauses can be used for non-copyright issues if, perhaps, somebody doesn't like the motive behind the unlocker.

So, as a result of this change, a number of organizations have withdrawn their support: iFixit, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Public Knowledge, Generation Opportunity, and FreedomWorks.

I hope to be able to continue to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to improve this bill, but with the current language, I do not believe, at this point, that this bill is a step forward for consumers.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time, it is my pleasure to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA), the chairman of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee.

Mr. ISSA. I thank the chairman.

Mr. Speaker, when I was alerted as to this change, like Mr. POLIS, I asked, What will be the impact? And, at first glance, I was concerned that it could be a poison pill, that it could limit the ability, for example, for somebody to take trade-ins of thousands of phones and unlock them, but I found no such case because they are buying from an individual.

At that moment, they choose to unlock it as part of the arrangement, and you now have an unlocked phone. There is no prohibition on buying 500 unlocked phones and selling 500 unlocked phones.

As a matter of fact, when I went through the language of bulk sales, I could find essentially no possible business plan that would require the unlocking of bulk phones, except as to buying from a wholesaler who did not intend them to be unlocked, intended them to be sold individually, unlocking them, and then selling them off to another party.

Any transaction in which the product gets to an individual or in which unlocking occurs at the time of the individual is fully covered by this bill.

So although I did share the concern of the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. POLIS) that there was a scenario in which somebody would not be able to unlock a phone, I discovered that there was nothing that the consumer would be affected by that could possibly affect this.

For example, let me say that, hypothetically, I am that individual, that company, and Mr. POLIS and I have something in common, which is we both ran companies. If I am an individual and I want to buy 1,000 locked phones, there is going to be an easy unlock capability. Third parties are going to be able to provide the unlock capability.

I can buy 1,000 locked phones or 100,000 locked phones. I can sell them to somebody else, who sells them to somebody else. Anytime that company or individual is down to the end user who wants to unlock a phone, that capability is there.

Mr. POLIS is one of the most intelligent and knowledgeable and trained people in this area of anyone in Congress, but if we go through each of the workarounds that we, in business, would do, I can find no scenario whatsoever in which this would stop the consumer from receiving an unlocked phone, if they chose to, even if, in the interim basis, there were many transactions of 10 or 100,000 phones of bulk sale.

It does not prevent the sale of unlocked bulk phones being sold and resold. It does not prevent the bulk sale of locked phones. So you only have to ensure, as I understand the law—and I have checked it against the language—that the unlocking occurs in support of the consumer.

So though I share the opposition's concern, I believe—I have looked through, vetted it, and like Mr. POLIS, as a businessman, I have found that it stops no business plan and hurts no consumer.

I thank the chairman for bringing this legislation. I urge its support.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Will the gentleman yield?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 1 minute to the gentleman from California.

Mr. ISSA. I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. GOODLATTE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, on the very point that the gentleman from California just raised, I will submit a letter for the RECORD from the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, representing many small businesses and entrepreneurs around America and endorsing this legislation.

I would also like to note that the Consumers Union of America and the Competitive Carriers Association, which are the small telecommunications companies that have to compete with the big behemoths, would both be concerned about their ability to compete in this very area; but they both support this legislation as well, the Consumers Union representing consumers and small businesses, and the SBE representing small businesses and entrepreneurs.

SBE COUNCIL,
Vienna, VA, February 24, 2014.

Hon. BOB GOODLATTE,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN GOODLATTE: The Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council (SBE Council) is pleased to support H.R. 1123, the Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act of 2013. Entrepreneurs require flexibility to successfully run their businesses, and they certainly support the freedom and choice provided by H.R. 1123.

H.R. 1123 repeals a Library of Congress (LOC) rulemaking determination regarding the circumvention of measures controlling access to copyrighted software on wireless telephone handsets for the purposes to connecting to other, different wireless handsets. This means entrepreneurs and small businesses can easily switch to another carrier once their contracts expire on their cell phones or tablets.

H.R. 1123 is a common sense measure that aligns government policies with the flexibility the 100,000 members of SBE Council need. We look forward to working with you to advance H.R. 1123.

Sincerely.

KAREN KERRIGAN,
President and Chief Executive Officer.

NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE,
Washington, DC, February 24, 2014.

Hon. ROBERT W. GOODLATTE,
Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN, I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to advise you of our support for H.R. 1123, the ''Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act,'' which has been favorably reported by your committee and is scheduled to be considered by the House later this week.

Law enforcement agencies across the country, and especially in large urban areas, have been experiencing an increase in the number of crimes that involve stolen wireless devices. Often, smartphones are stolen from consumers and then sold to the criminal

equivalent of an aggregator who unlocks them in bulk and attempts to sell them domestically or abroad. The ability to unlock these devices is a critical part of criminals' ability to resell them at a profit.

For this reason, as Congress contemplates legislation to facilitate lawful unlocking by individuals, either for themselves or for devices on a family plan, we urge you to retain the prohibition on bulk unlocking consistent with both the 2010 and 2012 decisions from the Copyright Office. We believe that maintaining this prohibition will reduce smartphone thefts because the criminal sale of these devices will no longer be as profitable.

Thank you as always for considering the views of the more than 330,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police. If I can provide any more information on this issue, please do not hesitate to contact me or Executive Director Jim Pasco in my Washington office.

Sincerely,

CHUCK CANTERBURY,
National President.

Mr. POLIS. I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, the inability to unlock cell phones means that the original wireless carrier has an unfair and unnecessary competitive advantage. In many instances, the sole purpose of locking a cell phone is to keep consumers bound to their existing networks.

Consumers often buy a new cell phone as part of their initial purchase of service from a carrier's wireless network. Because the phone is locked into that carrier's network, at the end of the first term of service, the consumer is forced to stay with that provider, sometimes at a higher rate, or being stuck with a useless locked phone.

Allowing a phone to be unlocked will allow a consumer to keep his phone and switch carriers to a more appropriate, affordable, or suitable plan and have that opportunity, without having to purchase a new phone. So I support H.R. 1123, as amended, as it will restore a consumer's ability to unlock their cell phones.

Now, obviously, allowing millions of consumers who wish to unlock their cell phones and switch to another provider, obviously, that has widespread support. The White House, the Federal Communications Commission, and others that the chairman of the committee have mentioned have all urged Congress to allow cell phone unlocking.

The bill, as amended, makes improvements to the bill as reported by the Judiciary Committee. The new language in the bill makes it clear that the sole purpose of the bill is to allow unlocking in order to switch carriers.

This bipartisan legislation enhances consumer choice in the cell phone market, and accordingly, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time, it is my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CHAFFETZ), a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. CHAFFETZ. I thank the gentleman from Virginia, Chairman GOODLATTE, for his leadership on this issue.

We woke up one day, Mr. Speaker, and the Library of Congress—the Library of Congress—decided that, if you unlocked your cell phone, that that would be a felony—a felony.

You go and buy a mobile phone. It is your phone. You own it. The current law on the books today, if you go to unlock that phone, you have committed a felony in the United States of America.

You have got to be kidding me. It is a felony to unlock your cell phone?

This bill today is short, sweet, and is simple. It is not a big, broad review of the DMCA. We are just trying to do something simple. We have an opportunity to make sure that that good person at home who wants to unlock their phone doesn't commit a felony. It is that short. It is that sweet. It is that simple.

I stand with Representatives LOFGREN, POLIS, and others who want to look at this bigger, broader reform. But for today, could we please just make sure that it is not a felony to unlock your own phone? My goodness. We can do that. We can do that.

I urge a ''yes'' vote on this bill. I appreciate the chairman's leadership. Let's get this done. Vote ''yes.''

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

In listening to the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA), there was a discussion of to what degree does this language interfere with potential and existing business models, and I agree with them. There are many workarounds. I think the danger here is invoking the language of copyright in an unrelated area.

To quote from Public Knowledge: this new language, even if Congress believes that bulk unlocking is a problem, it is clear that it is not a copyright problem. Just as individual unlocking is not a copyright problem, a bill designed to scale back overreaching copyright laws should not also endorse an overreach of copyright law.

I have a full statement from Public Knowledge that I will submit for the RECORD, Mr. Speaker. And as put by the Electronic Frontier Foundation, by expressly excluding bulk unlocking, this new legislation sends two dangerous signals: one, that Congress is okay with using copyright as an excuse to inhibit certain business models, even if the business isn't actually infringing on any of its copyrights; and, two, that Congress still doesn't understand the collateral damage section 1201 is causing.

For example, bulk unlocking not only benefits consumers, but it is also good for the environment. Unlocking allows reuse, and that means less electronic waste. I will be submitting the Electronic Frontier Foundation statement into the RECORD.

Again, the bill, as it passed committee, didn't weigh in on these matters of bulk unlocking and was satisfactory to consumer advocacy groups, including those that have now come out in opposition to this underlying bill.

Many of the arguments that the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) made about the potential use of phones for criminal purposes may, in fact, be valid arguments and may, in fact, deserve policy responses, but not within the realm of copyright law.

They deserve appropriate attention within the realm of criminal law and perhaps might prevail upon the expertise of both of my colleagues from Virginia, who know far more about these matters than I.

But if there need to be harsher penalties or more enforcement within criminal law with regard to the illegal use of cell phones, whether locked or unlocked, or illicit transactions, that would be an appropriate venue.

□ 1615

But invoking copyright law is a very dangerous precedent for an unrelated area. We did reach a bipartisan consensus on this bill in July, but at the last minute after the bill was marked up and reported out, this new language was added to the bill that would have negative effects on consumers' ability to unlock their phones.

The new language specifically states that the bill does not apply to bulk unlocking. Now, that signals that Congress believes that it is illegal for companies, including many small businesses and start-ups, to unlock cell phones in bulk, again, as Mr. ISSA pointed out, not binding language, not something that immediately would be used to prosecute a small business, but it would create greater uncertainty—not less uncertainty—around unlocking of cell phones in bulk, which could make it more difficult for consumers to buy an already unlocked, used cell phone. Again, since many consumers lack the technical expertise themselves to unlock cell phones, we want to ensure that they have availability to purchase unlocked cell phones and use them with the carrier of their choice.

Again, this is an inappropriate use of copyright law to bar small businesses and large businesses from unlocking devices when it has nothing to do with making illegal copies of protected works, the purpose of copyright law. Again, if there is a criminal problem, we should address that within the realm of criminal law and enforcement, not within the realm of copyright.

My colleague, Congresswoman LOFGREN, offered compromise language to Chairman GOODLATTE, but she reports back that this language was rejected because it was provided too late in the process. Again, I wish that Congresswoman LOFGREN and others were brought in earlier in the process. I think there was the general assumption among the advocates on my side of the bill and that encourage more consumer choice that the bill, as reported

from committee, would be the bill that was considered on the floor, as is traditionally done.

Unfortunately, we are not voting on that bill that had that bipartisan consensus in committee. The bill has changed, and the bill now can be perceived as picking sides with regard to congressional intent of application of copyright law for bulk unlocking, something that many of us see as a negative precedent with regard to consumer choice and overreach of using copyright law to protect incumbent advantages.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is never too late to reach a compromise. There is no rush to bring this bill to the floor today. There is a temporary agreement in place which offers consumers the same protections that are considered under this bill, and I hope that the chair and ranking member consider working to improve this bill so that it can pass this body unanimously. It doesn't need to be a controversial bill.

I fear that the bill currently before us, while, again, it enshrines some of the current protections that protect consumers that Mr. CHAFFETZ talked so passionately about, also, unfortunately, weighs in in applying copyright law in an unrelated area that can have the effect of restricting consumer choice.

I reserve the balance of my time.

REP. GOODLATTE SLIPS SECRET CHANGE INTO PHONE UNLOCKING BILL THAT OPENS THE DMCA UP FOR WIDER ABUSE

(By Mike Masnick)

As you may recall, there's been a ridiculous (on many levels) fight concerning the legality of ''unlocking'' mobile phones. Let's go through the history first. Because of section 1201 of the DMCA, the ''anti-circumvention'' provision, companies have been abusing copyright law to block all sorts of actions that are totally unrelated to copyright. That's because 1201 makes it illegal to circumvent basically any ''technological protection measures.'' The intent of the copyright maximalists was to use this section to stop people from breaking DRM. However, other companies soon distorted the language to argue that it could be used to block certain actions totally unrelated to copyright law—such as unlocking garage doors, ink jet cartridges, gaming accessories . . . and phones. There have been court cases about a number of these issues, with (thankfully) many courts ruling against this kind of abuse, though it still happens.

Separately, every three years, the Librarian of Congress gets to announce ''exemptions'' to section 1201 where it feels that things are being locked up that shouldn't be. Back in 2006, one of these exemptions involved mobile phone unlocking. Every three years this exemption was modified a bit, but in 2012, for unexplained reasons, the Librarian of Congress dropped that exemption entirely, meaning that starting in late January of 2013, it was possible to interpret the DMCA to mean that phone unlocking was illegal. In response to this there was a major White House petition—which got over 100,000 signatures, leading the White House to announce (just weeks later) that it thought unlocking should be legal—though, oddly, it seemed to place the issue with the FCC to fix, rather than recognizing the problem was with current copyright law.

Following this, a slew of new bills were introduced in Congress, many of which attempted to narrowly deal with the specific issue, while leaving the larger issues untouched. Many of these bills were incredibly problematic, though eventually the consensus seemed to get behind one bill before . . . nothing. Fast forward a year and nothing has changed, though the main bill, supported by Rep. Goodlatte, called the Unlocking Consumer Choice Act, is scheduled to go to a vote on Tuesday. It had gone through the basic markup process and some adjustments had been made to make it a good first step towards fixing problems.

As of last week, a bunch of folks, who were concerned about the issues with unlocking and how Section 1201 was a problem, were supportive of this bill and were expecting to publicly speak out in favor of getting the bill passed. Except . . . late last week, with no explanation whatsoever, and no consultation with others even though the markup and Judiciary Committee process had already concluded, Rep. GOODLATTE slipped into the bill a little poison pill/favor to big phone companies, adding a seemingly innocuous statement as section (c)(2):

No Bulk Unlocking—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to permit the unlocking of wireless handsets or other wireless devices, for the purpose of bulk resale, or to authorize the Librarian of Congress to authorize circumvention for such purpose under this Act, title 17, United States Code, or any other provision of law.

While this gives GOODLATTE and other maximalists some sort of plausible deniability that this bill is making no statement one way or the other on bulk unlocking, it certainly very strongly implies that Congress believes bulk unlocking is, in fact, still illegal. And that's massively problematic on any number of levels, in part suggesting that the unlocker's motives in unlocking has an impact on the determination under Section 1201 as to whether or not it's legal. And that's an entirely subjective distinction when a bill seems to assume motives, which makes an already problematic Section 1201 much more problematic. Without that clause, this seemed like a bill that was making it clear that you can't use the DMCA to interfere with an issue that is clearly unrelated to copyright, such as phone unlocking. But with this clause, it suggests that perhaps the DMCA's anti-circumvention clause can be used for entirely non-copyright issues if someone doesn't like the ''motive'' behind the unlocker.

Given that, both Public Knowledge and EFF have pulled their support for the bill. As Public Knowledge noted:

''The new language specifically excluding bulk unlocking could indicate that the drafters believe that phone unlocking has something to do with copyright law. This is not a position we support. Even if Congress believes that bulk unlocking is a problem, it's clear that it's not a copyright problem, just as individual unlocking is not a copyright problem. A bill designed to scale back overreaching copyright laws should not also endorse an overreach of copyright law.''

EFF made a similar statement:

By expressly excluding [bulk unlocking], this new legislation sends two dangerous signals: (1) that Congress is OK with using copyright as an excuse to inhibit certain business models, even if the business isn't actually infringing anyone's copyright; and (2) that Congress still doesn't understand the collateral damage Section 1201 is causing. For example, bulk unlocking not only benefits consumers, it's good for the environment—unlocking allows re-use, and that means less electronic waste

Two members of Congress who have been closely associated with these issues, Reps. Zoe Lofgren and Anna Eshoo, also pulled their support of the bill late Monday as well, expressing their clear outrage at how this change was slipped in after the fact, in a letter sent to their colleagues in the House:

After this bill was marked up and reported out of committee, a new section was added to the bill without notice to or consultation with us. . . .

They furthermore point out that it's ridiculous that Congress is not fixing the broken anti-circumvention parts of the DMCA, and could possibly be strengthening them with this sneaky change of language:

In his concurring opinion in Lexmark v. Static Control Components, Judge Merritt wrote: ''We should make clear that in the future companies like Lexmark cannot use the DMCA in conjunction with copyright law to create monopolies of manufactured goods for themselves . . .'' The court's holding prevented Lexmark from using dubious copyright claims and an overboard reading of 17 USC 1201—the same section the Unlocking Consumer Choice Act alters—to prevent third parties from creating competing printer ink cartridges. The issue is similar here.

UNLOCKING TO GET A VOTE IN CONGRESS, BUT THE BILL IS FLAWED

(By Troy Wolverton)

Congress on Tuesday is expected to take up the issue of cell phone unlocking. But what started out as an effort to restore consumer rights may end up being a setback to consumers.

While consumers may soon be able to legally unlock their cell phones again, the bill that would temporarily restore that right would essentially prohibit companies from making a business doing the same thing. In other words, while you could legally unlock your own cell phone—if you can figure out how to do it—you might have a difficult time buying an already unlocked used cell phone—because few of them would be on the market.

That wasn't how the bill, H.R. 1123, was originally written or what it stated when it was voted out of committee. Instead, the bill simply would have set aside for the next year or so a regulatory ruling from last year and allowed anyone—consumer or business—to unlock cell phones individually or in bulk.

But late last week, new language barring bulk unlocking was added surreptitiously to the bill. Although the new language wasn't subject to any hearings or public debate, it's included in the bill that will be voted on by Congress. What's worse is that the bill will apparently be voted on using a special procedure that would essentially bar both debate on the floor of the House and amendments to the bill.

The change to the bill was so substantial that Derek Khanna, a former Republican congressional staffer who started the campaign to reverse the regulatory ruling on unlocking and has worked for the past year to keep the issue alive, has become lukewarm on the bill, calling the new language ''troublesome.'' While he's still backing the bill, Khanna expressed hope that the Senate, when considering the issue, would work on a bill without the bulk unlocking ban.

Other former backers have now dropped their support for the unlocking bill. Among them: the Electronic Frontier Foundation, consumer advocacy group Public Knowledge and local Democratic representatives Anna Eshoo and Zoe Lofgren.

''We're all for phone freedom and we wish we could support the bill. Unfortunately, however, the costs for users outweigh the benefits,'' the EFF said in statement.

Cell phone manufacturers and carriers frequently use software to bind or lock devices

to particular networks. The locks are meant to make it difficult for consumers to take their devices with them to another carrier. Manufacturers and carriers say the locks are important to their businesses, allowing them to develop exclusive devices that can attract or retain consumers. Consumer advocates, meanwhile, basically view them as tools that thwart competition in the marketplace and prevent consumers from being able to fully control the devices they own.

The locks are protected by an obscure portion of U.S. copyright law that forbids consumers and businesses from tampering with protections put in place by intellectual property owners to protect their works—even when what they want to do with those works is completely legal or covered by fair use.

The Librarian of Congress is charged with reviewing, every three years, potential exemptions to that copyright provision. Starting in 2006, the Librarian recognized an exception for cell phone unlocking.

But in late 2012, the Librarian, citing the growing number of unlocked devices on the market, announced that the exemption would be revoked. Early last year, unlocking cell phones again became illegal.

Ever since, consumers and their advocates have pressed policy makers to overturn the Librarian's ruling. A petition to President Obama last year, for example, received more than 114,000 signatures in a little more than a month.

At its base, the dispute over unlocking is about whether copyright law can be twisted to forbid otherwise legal activities. The copyright provision that prohibits the breaking of software locks was written as the age of digital information was just starting to take off. One of the features of digital information is that computers can be used to make perfect copies of originals. There was a real fear on the part of copyright holders that the market for their goods would be undermined by a flood of perfect digital copies of their works. Why buy a song from Apple if you can simply download the same one for free from Napster? The provision was written to allow copyright holders to protect their works from this kind of illicit mass copying.

But since then, the provision has been used to thwart all kinds of otherwise legitimate activities. Not only has the unlocking of cell phones been impeded by the provision, but so too have things like the ''jailbreaking'' of iPads so that they can run programs not approved by Apple, the making of printer cartridges by companies other than the printer manufacturer, and reporting on security vulnerabilities.

Advocates for a renewed right of unlocking generally oppose this kind of restrictive view of copyright. They'd like Congress or regulators to recognize that, in general, breaking software locks is OK if the intention is to do something legal, something that might be covered under fair use or other consumer rights.

What those advocates find objectionable about the bulk unlocking bar in the new bill is that it represents something of a Congressional imprimatur for the more restrictive view of copyright, one in which copyright law can be used to ban business practices that have nothing to do with making illicit copies of protected works.

As Eshoo and Lofgren put it in a joint statement today: ''Congress should work to roll back abusive practices that use copyright law to prevent owners from having control over the devices they lawfully own. What it means to 'own' a device that has been purchased is what's at stake here. The new addition to the bill puts the effort to stand up for the property rights of the owners of technology devices at risk.''

Eshoo, Lofgren and other backers of unlocking have put their hope in a broader bill co-authored by the two that would grant a permanent right for consumers and businesses to unlock phones, but to circumvent software locks if the intent is to do something non-infringing.

As I wrote in my column today, I think that bill is a long shot, given the current dysfunction of Congress. Instead, I argued that the Federal Communications Commission should simply step in now and bar the locking of cell phones to particular carriers.

[From washingtonpost.com, Feb. 21, 2014]

HERE'S WHAT REFORMERS SAY IS MISSING FROM CONGRESS CELLPHONE UNLOCKING BILL

(By Timothy B. Lee)

Almost everyone agrees that unlocking your cellphone should be legal. But crafting legislation to give consumers the freedom everyone agrees they should have is surprisingly difficult.

The debate over cellphone unlocking started about a year ago, when a ruling by the Library of Congress suggested that unlocking your cellphone to take it to another wireless carrier could run afoul of copyright law. That triggered a grassroots backlash, prompting members of Congress and even the White House to support overruling the Librarian's ruling.

But crafting legislation to permit cellphone unlocking has been surprisingly complicated. Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R–Va.), the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, has introduced legislation permitting consumers to unlock their cellphones. But that legislation has gotten lukewarm support from public interest groups who say it doesn't go far enough in recognizing consumer rights.

On Friday, the advocacy group Public Knowledge announced it was withdrawing support from Goodlatte's bill after the chairman introduced a new version. The new version includes language permitting individuals to unlock their cellphones. But the legislation states that ''nothing in this subsection shall be construed to permit the unlocking of wireless handsets or other wireless devices, for the purpose of bulk resale.''

The problem, according to Public Knowledge's Sherwin Siy, is that the DMCA shouldn't apply to phone unlocking—''bulk'' or otherwise—in the first place. The DMCA was supposed to be about preventing piracy, not limiting what consumers do with their gadgets. The new Goodlatte bill ''doesn't prevent bulk unlocking but it certainly seems to suggest Congress thinks it's already prohibited,'' Siy says. That could be a step backwards.

The issue has significance well beyond cellphones. More and more of the products in our daily lives have computers embedded in them. If it's illegal to unlock your cellphone, it might be illegal to modify or repair a wide variety of other products. For example, all modern cars have computers embedded in them, and repairing a car increasingly requires accessing its onboard software. Could car manufacturers invoke the DMCA to prevent unauthorized repair work?

An aide to the judiciary committee insists that critics like Siy are over-reading the legislation. The bill is intended to allow cellphone unlocking, the aide says, without affecting broader questions about the scope of the DMCA. Those broader issues will be tackled later, as part of a broader review of U.S. copyright law.

But the current furor over cellphone unlocking represents a rare opportunity to craft DMCA reform that could actually pass Congress. If Congress passes narrow legislation fixing only the most obvious abuse of the DMCA, there might not be enough political capital left for a broader reform later on.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation, another public interest group that favors overhauling the DMCA, shares Siy's concern. ''We are deeply concerned that the bill has new language excluding bulk unlocking,'' EFF's Corynne McSherry says. ''Unlocking, whether individually or in bulk, makes reuse and repair possible, and is a public benefit. It should be clearly lawful.''

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute to say to the gentleman from Colorado, I understand that you would like to see copyright law changed. But the fact of the matter is this is copyright law, and so the fact of the matter is right now consumers cannot legally unlock their phones, and we need to fix that problem. We have been working to do it.

I have worked very closely with the ranking member of the full committee and the ranking member of the subcommittee on the Judiciary Committee so that this change that was made is bipartisan. It should come as a surprise to no one because we, in fact, discussed this during the markup of the bill in the committee. When we did discuss that, we said we would continue to work with Members moving forward, and we came up with language that is bipartisan.

It is also supported, by the way, by Senator LEAHY and Senator GRASSLEY in the United States Senate. This is a bipartisan and bicameral compromise to move this legislation forward to address the concerns of organizations like the American Consumers Union supporting this legislation, the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, the Competitive Carriers Association, the CTIA, and also, importantly——

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. GOODLATTE. I yield myself an additional 30 seconds. I will read very briefly from the letter from the National Fraternal Order of Police.

It says: ''As Congress contemplates legislation to facilitate lawful unlocking by individuals, either for themselves or for devices on a family plan, we urge you to retain the prohibition on bulk unlocking consistent with both the 2010 and 2012 decisions from the Copyright Office. We believe that maintaining this prohibition will reduce smartphone thefts because the criminal sale of these devices will no longer be as profitable.''

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) for purposes of a colloquy.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I would like to engage the chairman in a colloquy.

Mr. Chairman, am I correct that this legislation is meant to preserve the Registrar of Copyrights' findings on bulk resale of new phones in both the 2010 and 2012 rulemakings and is not intended to apply to used phones?

Mr. GOODLATTE. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I yield to the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. GOODLATTE. That is correct. This legislation is not intended to impair unlocking related to family plans consisting of a small number of handsets or of used phones by legitimate recyclers or resellers. The objective of this savings clause is to make it clear that the legislation does not cover those engaged in subsidy arbitrage or in attempting to use the unlocking process to further traffic in stolen devices.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Also, I think you have indicated that the Fraternal Order of Police is supportive of this provision as well?

Mr. GOODLATTE. That is correct.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, it is my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. COLLINS), a member of the Judiciary Committee.

Mr. COLLINS of Georgia. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Speaker, again, as we come here to talk about this, I join and associate myself with the gentleman from Utah and also the other comments that have been made here. We are looking to protect consumers. I enjoy the opportunity to go forward and look at an issue which we are supportive of: consumer choice.

As a member of the Judiciary Committee's IP Subcommittee, I believe if a consumer has met their contractual obligations with a service provider, then they should have the right to unlock and use the device with another carrier.

Our Nation's intellectual property law should prioritize three things: innovation, creation, and competition. Frankly, holding consumers hostage to their carrier fails to pass the smell test in this category.

We live in an age where consumers want choice, access, and freedom. Although carriers may have to evolve and develop to address the changes that this legislation may have on their business models, I am confident that any changes made will only better serve the consumer and promote competition.

It is with that in mind that I understand the gentleman from Colorado, and I understand the thought, because I actually had passed and do support the larger measure that came out of the Judiciary Committee. But also, in taking into account, there is a process here in which I believe that immediate help to consumers is the bigger issue and would be willing and will work, as I have stated before, for the larger measures that have been talked about here before. However, to hold this bill as it is and say this is not something to move forward on I can't accept and would urge all Members to accept this bill. It is a process of moving forward.

I do not believe that there is picking sides here. In fact, what I believe is happening here is we are protecting consumers and moving the discussion down the line. That is what we are sent here to do, and I believe this is a good balance between the two.

I respect the gentleman from Colorado and, Mr. Speaker, believe that we can work further on this, but this is a bill that needs to be passed today so we can move on and protect our consumers.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your work and the work of the committee in doing so. This is a matter of consumers, this is a matter of choice, and we need to make sure that this body stands for that.

Mr. POLIS. I would like to inquire, Mr. Speaker, as to how much time remains on both sides?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Colorado has 7½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Virginia has 8 minutes remaining.

Mr. POLIS. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Again, there seems to be some strong, bipartisan consensus here that there remains more work to be done. As Representative CHAFFETZ said, we do need a long-term solution. We need to ensure that any solution we enter is not compromised by our Nation's trade agreements to ensure that consumers are protected in control of their own devices in choosing the plan that they desire.

The language in question that was added after the bipartisan consensus was reached in committee is not operative language. It is not language that criminalizes something that wasn't criminal before or proactively bans the bulk sale of phones. What it does explicitly do is establish some degree of congressional intent.

Perhaps this colloquy between the two gentlemen from Virginia helped roll back a part of what could be read in the congressional intent of this language, and I am appreciative of that effort. However, congressional intent could, nevertheless, be construed that there is an imprint, there is a congressional desire to use a more restrictive view of copyright, one in which copyright laws can be used to ban business practices that have nothing to do with making illicit copies of protected works.

Copyrights are a very important area of law. It is meant to protect the creator of a work from having their work ripped off and sold and others profit at their expense. However, it is difficult to see, and this is why so many of us were critical of the Librarian of Congress' initial decision. It is very difficult to see what the nexus is between unlocking cell phones and copyright.

By adding this language in, it adds some degree of congressional perception that copyright law can be what many of us feel to be abused in this manner that reduces consumer choice and does not protect any legitimate creator of a work. Again, to the extent there are concerns from police and law enforcement officials with regard to how unlocked or locked cell phones are being used for transactions that are otherwise illegal, that is a question of criminal law and enforcement and something that I would hope to be certainly supportive of efforts within Judiciary or Homeland Security or other committees to ensure that we reduce crime across all of those. But let's not give the court's ruling on these actions a reason to think that perhaps Congress condones them.

Again, having my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on the RECORD talking about how this bill is simply a first step and how we need to go further and, of course, not backing away from the initial committee markup of the bill, it is certainly also helpful in establishing congressional intent. And that is really what we are talking about here. We are not talking about binding language where before this bill passes somebody doesn't go to jail, after this bill passes they do. We are talking about potential use and precedent going forward with regard to how copyright law can, from my perception, be misapplied to reduce consumer choice in areas that are unrelated to the purpose of copyright protection.

That is why I continue to stand in opposition to this bill, certainly appreciating the step forward of enshrining in law potentially that it is no criminal penalty for an individual unlocking their own cell phone. But, again, we want to make sure it doesn't happen at the expense of moving the entire discussion in the wrong direction.

An opinion in yesterday's L.A. Times was headlined, ''The House's cell phone unlocking bill: Thanks but no thanks.'' I would like to submit the L.A. Times op-ed into the RECORD, Mr. Speaker.

I reserve the balance of my time.

[From the Los Angeles Times, Feb. 25, 2014]

THE HOUSE'S CELLPHONE UNLOCKING BILL: THANKS BUT NO THANKS

(By Jon Healey)

How hard can it be for Congress to make it legal for consumers to switch mobile networks without having to buy a new phone?

Too hard, evidently.

The House is scheduled to vote Tuesday on a bill that was supposed to clear the way for consumers to unlock the phones they buy from wireless companies after they've fulfilled their contracts. But the measure, which was modest to begin with, has been rendered irrelevant by voluntary agreements on unlocking that the Federal Communications Commission obtained from the wireless companies. The bill was also changed at the last minute in a way that arguably weakens consumers' ownership rights, prompting some consumer advocates and Democrats to withdraw their support.

The current version is so bad, consumers would be better off if Congress did nothing at all.

At issue is a dubious interpretation of copyright law that deters people from moving their phones from one network to another. Each mobile carrier typically sells phones with electronic locks that prevent them from being reprogrammed to work on rival carriers' networks. The U.S. Copyright Office, acting through the Librarian of Congress, ruled in 2012 that removing the locks violated the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, which forbids the circumvention of technologies that protect copyrighted works.

The ruling was bizarre, considering that the locks inside phones don't protect against

software piracy; their only real purpose is to protect the mobile carriers' business model. And the carriers have (and use) better tools to recover the subsidies they put into the phones they sell, most notably contracts that impose hefty early termination penalties.

The 1998 law requires the Librarian of Congress to revisit the anti-circumvention rules every three years, which means the Electronic Frontier Foundation and other consumer advocates can try to set things right in 2015. Sadly, however, the default interpretation of the cellphone locks is that they are covered by the anti-circumvention ban.

The Copyright Office's decision, which took effect early last year, led more than 100,000 people to petition the White House for help. Tech-friendly lawmakers lined up to offer bills, including an elegantly simple one by Sen. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D–Wis.) that would require mobile companies to let customers unlock the wireless devices they buy, and a more sweeping proposal by Sen. RON WYDEN (D–Ore.) to exempt wireless device unlocking from the anti-circumvention ban.

The best of the bunch was a bill by Rep. ZOE LOFGREN (D–San Jose) and a bipartisan group of co-sponsors to limit the 1998 law's anti-circumvention rules to locks that protect against piracy. That bill also would have declared that it was not copyright infringement for the owner of a mobile device to unlock it for the purpose of switching to another network.

The House, however, is scheduled to take up a different measure Tuesday afternoon, H.R. 1123 by Judiciary Committee Chairman BOB GOODLATTE (R–Va.) and co-sponsors from both parties. As introduced, it would simply have replaced the Copyright Office's 2012 ruling with its decision in 2010 that cellphone owners could unlock their phones without running afoul of copyrights. It also would have called on the Librarian of Congress to decide within a year whether to extend the exemption to all other locked wireless devices, such as tablets.

The relief offered by the bill would have remained in effect only until the Librarian of Congress reviewed the anti-circumvention rules again in 2015, so it hardly seemed worth the effort. The version that the House is slated to vote on Tuesday also includes a new provision effectively barring devices from being unlocked in bulk for the purpose of reselling them.

The latter change disturbed LOFGREN (a member of Goodlatte's committee) and fellow Silicon Valley Democrat ANNA ESHOO, who accused Republicans of adding the provision in secret after the Judiciary Committee approved the bill. The proposed ban on unlocking for the sake of resale, they argued in a letter to colleagues Monday, is an inappropriate use of copyright law to stop people from disposing of the devices they buy as they please.

''Congress should work to roll back abusive practices that use copyright law to prevent owners from having control over the devices they lawfully own,'' LOFGREN and ESHOO wrote. ''What it means to 'own' a device that has been purchased is what's at stake here. The new addition to the bill puts the effort to stand up for the property rights of the owners of technology devices at risk.''

Public Knowledge, a technology advocacy group, agreed. ''Even if Congress believes that bulk unlocking is a problem, it's clear that it's not a copyright problem, just as individual unlocking is not a copyright problem,'' said Sherwin Siy, the group's vice president of legal affairs. ''A bill designed to scale back overreaching copyright laws should not also endorse an overreach of copyright law.''

Both Public Knowledge and the Electronic Frontier Foundation withdrew their support for the measure after the new provision was disclosed last week.

The House plans to bring up HR 1123 under an expedited procedure that forbids amendments but requires a two-thirds vote to pass. With some luck, LOFGREN and ESHOO can rally all the supposedly tech-friendly members in the chamber to knock the bill off track.

As you may recall, there's been a ridiculous (on many levels) fight concerning the legality of ''unlocking'' mobile phones. Let's go through the history first. Because of section 1201 of the DMCA, the ''anti-circumvention'' provision, companies have been abusing copyright law to block all sorts of actions that are totally unrelated to copyright. That's because 1201 makes it illegal to circumvent basically any ''technological protection measures.'' The intent of the copyright maximalists was to use this section to stop people from breaking DRM. However, other companies soon distorted the language to argue that it could be used to block certain actions totally unrelated to copyright law—such as unlocking garage doors, ink jet cartridges, gaming accessories . . . and phones. There have been court cases about a number of these issues, with (thankfully) many courts ruling against this kind of abuse, though it still happens.

Separately, every three years, the Librarian of Congress gets to announce ''exemptions'' to section 1201 where it feels that things are being locked up that shouldn't be. Back in 2006, one of these exemptions involved mobile phone unlocking. Every three years this exemption was modified a bit, but in 2012, for unexplained reasons, the Librarian of Congress dropped that exemption entirely, meaning that starting in late January of 2013, it was possible to interpret the DMCA to mean that phone unlocking was illegal. In response to this there was a major White House petition—which got over 100,000 signatures, leading the White House to announce (just weeks later) that it thought unlocking should be legal—though, oddly, it seemed to place the issue with the FCC to fix, rather than recognizing the problem was with current copyright law.

Following this, a slew of new bills were introduced in Congress, many of which attempted to narrowly deal with the specific issue, while leaving the larger issues untouched. Many of these bills were incredibly problematic, though eventually the consensus seemed to get behind one bill before... nothing. Fast forward a year and nothing has changed, though the main bill, supported by Rep. Goodlatte, called the Unlocking Consumer Choice Act, is scheduled to go to a vote on Tuesday. It had gone through the basic markup process and some adjustments had been made to make it a good first step towards fixing problems.

As of last week, a bunch of folks, who were concerned about the issues with unlocking and how Section 1201 was a problem, were supportive of this bill and were expecting to publicly speak out in favor of getting the bill passed. Except... late last week, with no explanation whatsoever, and no consultation with others even though the markup and Judiciary Committee process had already concluded, Rep. GOODLATTE slipped into the bill a little poison pill/favor to big phone companies, adding a seemingly innocuous statement as section (c)(2):

No Bulk Unlocking—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to permit the unlocking of wireless handsets or other wireless devices, for the purpose of bulk resale, or to authorize the Librarian of Congress to authorize circumvention for such purpose under this Act, title 17, United States Code, or any other provision of law.

While this gives GOODLATTE and other maximalists some sort of plausible deniability that this bill is making no statement one way or the other on bulk unlocking, it certainly very strongly implies that Congress believes bulk unlocking is, in fact, still illegal. And that's massively problematic on any number of levels, in part suggesting that the unlocker's motives in unlocking has an impact on the determination under Section 1201 as to whether or not it's legal. And that's an entirely subjective distinction when a bill seems to assume motives, which makes an already problematic Section 1201 much more problematic. Without that clause, this seemed like a bill that was making it clear that you can't use the DMCA to interfere with an issue that is clearly unrelated to copyright, such as phone unlocking. But with this clause, it suggests that perhaps the DMCA's anti-circumvention clause can be used for entirely non-copyright issues if someone doesn't like the ''motive'' behind the unlocker.

Given that, both Public Knowledge and EFF have pulled their support for the bill. As Public Knowledge noted:

''The new language specifically excluding bulk unlocking could indicate that the drafters believe that phone unlocking has something to do with copyright law. This is not a position we support. Even if Congress believes that bulk unlocking is a problem, it's clear that it's not a copyright problem, just as individual unlocking is not a copyright problem. A bill designed to scale back overreaching copyright laws should not also endorse an overreach of copyright law.''

EFF made a similar statement:

By expressly excluding [bulk unlocking], this new legislation sends two dangerous signals: (1) that Congress is OK with using copyright as an excuse to inhibit certain business models, even if the business isn't actually infringing anyone's copyright; and (2) that Congress still doesn't understand the collateral damage Section 1201 is causing. For example, bulk unlocking not only benefits consumers, it's good for the environment—unlocking allows re-use, and that means less electronic waste

Two members of Congress who have been closely associated with these issues, Reps. ZOE LOFGREN and ANNA ESHOO, also pulled their support of the bill late Monday as well, expressing their clear outrage at how this change was slipped in after the fact, in a letter sent to their colleagues in the House:

After this bill was marked up and reported out of committee, a new section was added to the bill without notice to or consultation with us. . . .

They furthermore point out that it's ridiculous that Congress is not fixing the broken anti-circumvention parts of the DMCA, and could possibly be strengthening them with this sneaky change of language:

In his concurring opinion in Lexmark v. Static Control Components, Judge Merritt wrote: ''We should make clear that in the future companies like Lexmark cannot use the DMCA in conjunction with copyright law to create monopolies of manufactured goods for themselves . . .'' The court's holding prevented Lexmark from using dubious copyright claims and an overboard reading of 17 USC 1201—the same section the Unlocking Consumer Choice Act alters—to prevent third parties from creating competing printer ink cartridges. The issue is similar here.

Congress should work to roll back abusive practices that use copyright law to prevent owners from having control over the devices they lawfully own. What it means to ''own'' a device that has been purchased is what's at stake here. The new addition to the bill puts the effort to stand up for the property rights of the owners of technology devices at risk.

It is sad that the bipartisan consensus reached during mark-up in the Judiciary

committee to improve the law has been destroyed by a secret decision of the majority after the bill was reported out.

Unfortunately, the bill was deemed so uncontroversial that it's been listed on the suspension calendar of the House, which is where non-controversial bills are put to ensure quick passage. That means that, not only did Goodlatte slip in a significant change to this bill that impacts the entire meaning and intent of the bill long after it went through the committee process (and without informing anyone about it), but he also got it put on the list of non-controversial bills to try to have it slip through without anyone even noticing.

Either way, it seems that even if the bill does pass, it won't do anything to fix a very broken part of the DMCA and, in fact, could make it somewhat worse. Politics as usual when it comes to anything having to do with copyright.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I am the last speaker remaining on our side. I believe I have the right to close, so if the gentleman has anything else he would like to say.

Mr. POLIS. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close, and I yield myself the balance of my time.

I am heartened by the discussion on both sides of the aisle with regard to the path forward. I wish we could be at a better place today. I think we had a bill that was reported out of committee that would not have engendered, I don't believe, any degree of controversy here on the floor of the House.

We have now moved to a place where the bill does invoke some degree of appropriate controversy and some degree of appropriate opposition. I would advance that it is never too late to reach a compromise, either before this bill is voted upon—perhaps my colleague, Mr. GOODLATTE, will be willing to consider Ms. LOFGREN's language change—or after this bill passes. I think that we would all agree that this issue is not one in any way, shape, or form that is being put to bed here today.

I would hope that, as a guiding principle, Members on both sides of the aisle look to consumer choice and the power of markets to achieve the best outcome and ensure that incumbents don't seek to co-opt copyright law to the detriment of our economy and the detriment of consumer choice.

□ 1630

Again, this bill has language that can be construed as applying copyright law in another area and having a congressional blessing to do so, which is why I encourage my colleagues to join Electronic Frontier Foundation, Public Knowledge, Generation Opportunity, FreedomWorks, and iFixit, and some of those very organizations that were in the forefront of proposing that we pass a bill that allows unlocking that have since withdrawn their support from this bill because of the last-minute changes, which I saw for the first time yesterday and that I wish this House had a bigger opportunity to vet, perhaps bringing this bill forward under a rule if the suspension motion fails.

If a third of the Members of the House oppose, we would have an opportunity to remedy this bill under a rule that was hopefully structured to allow for compromise language that would then allow the bill to proceed with near unanimity. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle see that as an opportunity, certainly not as a rebuke to the chair and ranking member on the committee. We appreciate the direction and the intent behind this bill, their desire to make sure that Americans know that they are not under duress or a criminal threat if they are unlocking their own cell phone. That is a sentiment that both the chair and the ranking member have echoed passionately, but I think we can do better with regard to ensuring that this bill is also not a precedent for the use of overreaching copyright law and a congressional blessing to do so in a way that hampers the trade, the bulk trade of unlocked cell phones which offer great potential benefits to the marketplace and to consumers.

So I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this suspension bill, to consider working with both sides to get to ''yes,'' and to move in a direction that we look at as a guiding principle, ensuring that consumers and the marketplace are allowed to fully operate without the co-option of copyright law to protect incumbents.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

I would just say to the gentleman from Colorado, I understand his larger aspirations with regard to changes in copyright law. The committee recognizes that our copyright laws have not been amended in 40 years, and that we are conducting a comprehensive review. We have held many hearings on copyright issues already. We have many more planned, and we are going to continue that work, but this small bill to protect the rights of consumers on cell phone unlocking does not meet his aspirations to try to use it as a vehicle for greater things being done here because it is intended to be a narrow fix to a problem that was created when the Register of Copyrights did not take the necessary steps to allow the continued unlocking of cell phones.

So it has taken a great deal of bipartisan work on the part of the ranking member and myself; the ranking member of the subcommittee, who had objections to the bill as reported out of the committee, has since left Congress, and the new ranking member has signed off on the change that was made here to bring organizations like the Fraternal Order of Police into acceptance of this, and we still have the support of important consumer organizations, like Consumers Union, as well as the cell phone industry organizations. As a result, this legislation needs to move forward as it is today.

The savings clause that the gentleman objects to is meant to make it clear that this is focused on consumers and not on the larger issues. If enacting in one area as we are in this very narrow, targeted bill, we sent a signal in another area, and a signal is what the gentleman identifies, we would never enact anything. So it is important that we address what is in this bill, the language that was worked out in the committee, that was discussed in the committee, that was then worked out further as the bill was reported to the floor, and pass this legislation today, and we can work on these broader issues in the future, but in the meantime, we need to protect the rights of our consumers to unlock the phones that they own when they purchase a used cell phone.

Ms. LOFGREN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GOODLATTE. I am happy to yield briefly to the gentlewoman.

Ms. LOFGREN. I appreciate the gentleman yielding. I was delayed at the airport. I just wanted to indicate my opposition to the bill since it has been changed, noting that Public Knowledge in the Los Angeles Times said today that we would be better off doing nothing than the bill as changed. I have talked to the chairman about this, but I wanted to make my position clear. If we do not pass this bill because of the Obama administration's deal with the telecoms, consumers will still be able to unlock their phones. This is a step backwards.

I very much appreciate the gentleman's courtesy in yielding.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Reclaiming my time, what the gentlewoman says is, indeed, true; that there is a private agreement, but that private agreement cannot and does not mitigate the fact that the act of unlocking a cell phone carries with it a felony penalty under the law, and that is absolutely ridiculous. So this legislation needs to be passed, and we can then move on to have the larger debate about the importance of cell phone unlocking—or rather, section 1201 of the DMCA, and other issues as we move forward on various copyright issues in the committee, but now is not the place, now is not the time to have that debate.

This simple, bipartisan legislation should be passed by the House. I urge my colleagues to support the legislation.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1123, 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. POLIS. 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.

PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS PROTECTION ACT OF 2013

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1944) to protect private property rights.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1944

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 ''Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2013''.

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON EMINENT DOMAIN ABUSE BY STATES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—No State or political subdivision of a State shall exercise its power of eminent domain, or allow the exercise of such power by any person or entity to which such power has been delegated, over property to be used for economic development or over property that is used for economic development within 7 years after that exercise, if that State or political subdivision receives Federal economic development funds during any fiscal year in which the property is so used or intended to be used.

(b) INELIGIBILITY FOR FEDERAL FUNDS.—A violation of subsection (a) by a State or political subdivision shall render such State or political subdivision ineligible for any Federal economic development funds for a period of 2 fiscal years following a final judgment on the merits by a court of competent jurisdiction that such subsection has been violated, and any Federal agency charged with distributing those funds shall withhold them for such 2-year period, and any such funds distributed to such State or political subdivision shall be returned or reimbursed by such State or political subdivision to the appropriate Federal agency or authority of the Federal Government, or component thereof.

(c) OPPORTUNITY TO CURE VIOLATION.—A State or political subdivision shall not be ineligible for any Federal economic development funds under subsection (b) if such State or political subdivision returns all real property the taking of which was found by a court of competent jurisdiction to have constituted a violation of subsection (a) and replaces any other property destroyed and repairs any other property damaged as a result of such violation. In addition, the State or political subdivision must pay any applicable penalties and interest to reattain eligibility.

SEC. 3. PROHIBITION ON EMINENT DOMAIN ABUSE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

The Federal Government or any authority of the Federal Government shall not exercise its power of eminent domain to be used for economic development.

SEC. 4. PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.

(a) CAUSE OF ACTION.—Any (1) owner of private property whose property is subject to eminent domain who suffers injury as a result of a violation of any provision of this Act with respect to that property, or (2) any tenant of property that is subject to eminent domain who suffers injury as a result of a violation of any provision of this Act with respect to that property, may bring an action to enforce any provision of this Act in the appropriate Federal or State court. A State shall not be immune under the 11th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States from any such action in a Federal or State court of competent jurisdiction. In such action, the defendant has the burden to show by clear and convincing evidence that the taking is not for economic development. Any such property owner or tenant may also seek an appropriate relief through a preliminary injunction or a temporary restraining order.

(b) LIMITATION ON BRINGING ACTION.—An action brought by a property owner or tenant under this Act may be brought if the property is used for economic development following the conclusion of any condemnation proceedings condemning the property of such property owner or tenant, but shall not be brought later than seven years following the conclusion of any such proceedings.

(c) ATTORNEYS' FEE AND OTHER COSTS.—In any action or proceeding under this Act, the court shall allow a prevailing plaintiff a reasonable attorneys' fee as part of the costs, and include expert fees as part of the attorneys' fee.

SEC. 5. REPORTING OF VIOLATIONS TO ATTORNEY GENERAL.

(a) SUBMISSION OF REPORT TO ATTORNEY GENERAL.—Any (1) owner of private property whose property is subject to eminent domain who suffers injury as a result of a violation of any provision of this Act with respect to that property, or (2) any tenant of property that is subject to eminent domain who suffers injury as a result of a violation of any provision of this Act with respect to that property, may report a violation by the Federal Government, any authority of the Federal Government, State, or political subdivision of a State to the Attorney General.

(b) INVESTIGATION BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—Upon receiving a report of an alleged violation, the Attorney General shall conduct an investigation to determine whether a violation exists.

(c) NOTIFICATION OF VIOLATION.—If the Attorney General concludes that a violation does exist, then the Attorney General shall notify the Federal Government, authority of the Federal Government, State, or political subdivision of a State that the Attorney General has determined that it is in violation of the Act. The notification shall further provide that the Federal Government, State, or political subdivision of a State has 90 days from the date of the notification to demonstrate to the Attorney General either that (1) it is not in violation of the Act or (2) that it has cured its violation by returning all real property the taking of which the Attorney General finds to have constituted a violation of the Act and replacing any other property destroyed and repairing any other property damaged as a result of such violation.

(d) ATTORNEY GENERAL'S BRINGING OF ACTION TO ENFORCE ACT.—If, at the end of the 90-day period described in subsection (c), the Attorney General determines that the Federal Government, authority of the Federal Government, State, or political subdivision of a State is still violating the Act or has not cured its violation as described in subsection (c), then the Attorney General will bring an action to enforce the Act unless the property owner or tenant who reported the violation has already brought an action to enforce the Act. In such a case, the Attorney General shall intervene if it determines that intervention is necessary in order to enforce the Act. The Attorney General may file its lawsuit to enforce the Act in the appropriate Federal or State court. A State shall not be immune under the 11th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States from any such action in a Federal or State court of competent jurisdiction. In such action, the defendant has the burden to show by clear and convincing evidence that the taking is not for economic development. The Attorney General may seek any appropriate relief through a preliminary injunction or a temporary restraining order.

(e) LIMITATION ON BRINGING ACTION.—An action brought by the Attorney General under this Act may be brought if the property is used for economic development following the conclusion of any condemnation proceedings condemning the property of an owner or tenant who reports a violation of the Act to the Attorney General, but shall not be brought later than seven years following the conclusion of any such proceedings.

(f) ATTORNEYS' FEE AND OTHER COSTS.—In any action or proceeding under this Act brought by the Attorney General, the court shall, if the Attorney General is a prevailing plaintiff, award the Attorney General a reasonable attorneys' fee as part of the costs, and include expert fees as part of the attorneys' fee.

SEC. 6. NOTIFICATION BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.

(a) NOTIFICATION TO STATES AND POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS.—

(1) Not later than 30 days after the enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall provide to the chief executive officer of each State the text of this Act and a description of the rights of property owners and tenants under this Act.

(2) Not later than 120 days after the enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall compile a list of the Federal laws under which Federal economic development funds are distributed. The Attorney General shall compile annual revisions of such list as necessary. Such list and any successive revisions of such list shall be communicated by the Attorney General to the chief executive officer of each State and also made available on the Internet website maintained by the United States Department of Justice for use by the public and by the authorities in each State and political subdivisions of each State empowered to take private property and convert it to public use subject to just compensation for the taking.

(b) NOTIFICATION TO PROPERTY OWNERS AND TENANTS.—Not later than 30 days after the enactment of this Act, the Attorney General shall publish in the Federal Register and make available on the Internet website maintained by the United States Department of Justice a notice containing the text of this Act and a description of the rights of property owners and tenants under this Act.

SEC. 7. REPORTS.

(a) BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, and every subsequent year thereafter, the Attorney General shall transmit a report identifying States or political subdivisions that have used eminent domain in violation of this Act to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives and to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate. The report shall—

(1) identify all private rights of action brought as a result of a State's or political subdivision's violation of this Act;

(2) identify all violations reported by property owners and tenants under section 5(c) of this Act;

(3) identify the percentage of minority residents compared to the surrounding nonminority residents and the median incomes of those impacted by a violation of this Act;

(4) identify all lawsuits brought by the Attorney General under section 5(d) of this Act;

(5) identify all States or political subdivisions that have lost Federal economic development funds as a result of a violation of this Act, as well as describe the type and amount of Federal economic development funds lost in each State or political subdivision and the Agency that is responsible for withholding such funds; and

(6) discuss all instances in which a State or political subdivision has cured a violation as described in section 2(c) of this Act.

(b) DUTY OF STATES.—Each State and local authority that is subject to a private right of action under this Act shall have the duty to report to the Attorney General such information with respect to such State and local authorities as the Attorney General needs to make the report required under subsection (a).

SEC. 8. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING RURAL AMERICA.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds the following:

(1) The founders realized the fundamental importance of property rights when they codified the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, which requires that private property shall not be taken ''for public use, without just compensation''.

(2) Rural lands are unique in that they are not traditionally considered high tax revenue-generating properties for State and local governments. In addition, farmland and forest land owners need to have long-term certainty regarding their property rights in order to make the investment decisions to commit land to these uses.

(3) Ownership rights in rural land are fundamental building blocks for our Nation's agriculture industry, which continues to be one of the most important economic sectors of our economy.

(4) In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in Kelo v. City of New London, abuse of eminent domain is a threat to the property rights of all private property owners, including rural land owners.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the use of eminent domain for the purpose of economic development is a threat to agricultural and other property in rural America and that the Congress should protect the property rights of Americans, including those who reside in rural areas. Property rights are central to liberty in this country and to our economy. The use of eminent domain to take farmland and other rural property for economic development threatens liberty, rural economies, and the economy of the United States. The taking of farmland and rural property will have a direct impact on existing irrigation and reclamation projects. Furthermore, the use of eminent domain to take rural private property for private commercial uses will force increasing numbers of activities from private property onto this Nation's public lands, including its National forests, National parks and wildlife refuges. This increase can overburden the infrastructure of these lands, reducing the enjoyment of such lands for all citizens. Americans should not have to fear the government's taking their homes, farms, or businesses to give to other persons. Governments should not abuse the power of eminent domain to force rural property owners from their land in order to develop rural land into industrial and commercial property. Congress has a duty to protect the property rights of rural Americans in the face of eminent domain abuse.

SEC. 9. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the policy of the United States to encourage, support, and promote the private ownership of property and to ensure that the constitutional and other legal rights of private property owners are protected by the Federal Government.

SEC. 10. RELIGIOUS AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

(a) PROHIBITION ON STATES.—No State or political subdivision of a State shall exercise its power of eminent domain, or allow the exercise of such power by any person or entity to which such power has been delegated, over property of a religious or other nonprofit organization by reason of the nonprofit or tax-exempt status of such organization, or any quality related thereto if that State or political subdivision receives Federal economic development funds during any fiscal year in which it does so.

(b) INELIGIBILITY FOR FEDERAL FUNDS.—A violation of subsection (a) by a State or political subdivision shall render such State or political subdivision ineligible for any Federal economic development funds for a period of 2 fiscal years following a final judgment on the merits by a court of competent jurisdiction that such subsection has been violated, and any Federal agency charged with distributing those funds shall withhold them for such 2-year period, and any such funds distributed to such State or political subdivision shall be returned or reimbursed by such State or political subdivision to the appropriate Federal agency or authority of the Federal Government, or component thereof.

(c) PROHIBITION ON FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.—The Federal Government or any authority of the Federal Government shall not exercise its power of eminent domain over property of a religious or other nonprofit organization by reason of the nonprofit or tax-exempt status of such organization, or any quality related thereto.

SEC. 11. REPORT BY FEDERAL AGENCIES ON REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES RELATING TO EMINENT DOMAIN.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the head of each Executive department and agency shall review all rules, regulations, and procedures and report to the Attorney General on the activities of that department or agency to bring its rules, regulations and procedures into compliance with this Act.

SEC. 12. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that any and all precautions shall be taken by the government to avoid the unfair or unreasonable taking of property away from survivors of Hurricane Katrina who own, were bequeathed, or assigned such property, for economic development purposes or for the private use of others.

SEC. 13. DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACT.

If the court determines that a violation of this Act has occurred, and that the violation has a disproportionately high impact on the poor or minorities, the Attorney General shall use reasonable efforts to locate former owners and tenants and inform them of the violation and any remedies they may have.

SEC. 14. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act the following definitions apply:

(1) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.—The term ''economic development'' means taking private property, without the consent of the owner, and conveying or leasing such property from one private person or entity to another private person or entity for commercial enterprise carried on for profit, or to increase tax revenue, tax base, employment, or general economic health, except that such term shall not include—

(A) conveying private property—

(i) to public ownership, such as for a road, hospital, airport, or military base;

(ii) to an entity, such as a common carrier, that makes the property available to the general public as of right, such as a railroad or public facility;

(iii) for use as a road or other right of way or means, open to the public for transportation, whether free or by toll; and

(iv) for use as an aqueduct, flood control facility, pipeline, or similar use;

(B) removing harmful uses of land provided such uses constitute an immediate threat to public health and safety;

(C) leasing property to a private person or entity that occupies an incidental part of public property or a public facility, such as a retail establishment on the ground floor of a public building;

(D) acquiring abandoned property;

(E) clearing defective chains of title;

(F) taking private property for use by a utility providing electric, natural gas, telecommunication, water, wastewater, or other utility services either directly to the public or indirectly through provision of such services at the wholesale level for resale to the public; and

(G) redeveloping of a brownfield site as defined in the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act (42 U.S.C. 9601(39)).

(2) FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUNDS.—The term ''Federal economic development funds'' means any Federal funds distributed to or through States or political subdivisions of States under Federal laws designed to improve or increase the size of the economies of States or political subdivisions of States.

(3) STATE.—The term ''State'' means each of the several States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or any other territory or possession of the United States.

SEC. 15. LIMITATION ON STATUTORY CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act may be construed to supersede, limit, or otherwise affect any provision of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. 4601 et seq.).

SEC. 16. BROAD CONSTRUCTION.

This Act shall be construed in favor of a broad protection of private property rights, to the maximum extent permitted by the terms of this Act and the Constitution.

SEC. 17. SEVERABILITY AND EFFECTIVE DATE.

(a) SEVERABILITY.—The provisions of this Act are severable. If any provision of this Act, or any application thereof, is found unconstitutional, that finding shall not affect any provision or application of the Act not so adjudicated.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This Act shall take effect upon the first day of the first fiscal year that begins after the date of the enactment of this Act, but shall not apply to any project for which condemnation proceedings have been initiated prior to the date of enactment.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SCOTT) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 1944, currently under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

In 1997, Susette Kelo was trying to rebuild her life when she purchased a small, Victorian house perched on the waterfront in the Fort Trumbull neighborhood of New London, Connecticut.

It was Susette's dream to own a home that looked out over the water. The little pink house she purchased was in need of repair, but with lots of hard work, she was able to restore it and start a new life for herself on the banks of the Thames River. Susette was finally living her dream.

Tragically, however, the city of New London turned that dream into a nightmare.

In 1998, pharmaceutical giant Pfizer announced its intent to build a plant in Fort Trumbull, and the city of New London began planning a massive redevelopment of the area surrounding the Pfizer plant. The city handed its power of eminent domain to a private corporation to take the entire neighborhood for economic development purposes.

Susette and several of her neighbors, some of whose families had lived in their homes for generations, challenged the city's use of eminent domain all of the way to the U.S. Supreme Court in a desperate attempt to save their homes and their mostly blue collar neighborhood.

However, the Supreme Court, in one of the most controversial rulings in its history, held that private economic development constitutes a ''public use'' under the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Under the Court's reasoning, the government can now use the eminent domain power to take the property of any individual for nearly any reason. As the dissenting justices observed, by defining public use so expansively, the result of the decision is:

> Effectively to delete the words ''for public use'' from the takings clause of the Fifth Amendment. The specter of condemnation hangs over all property. Nothing is to prevent the State from replacing any Motel 6 with a Ritz-Carlton, any home with a shopping mall, or any farm with a factory. The government now has license to transfer property from those with few resources to those with more. The Founders cannot have intended this perverse result.

The Court's 5–4 decision against Susette and her neighbors sparked a nationwide backlash against eminent domain abuse. Susette's fight helped remind Americans that private ownership of property is vital to our freedom and our prosperity, and is one of the most fundamental principles embedded in the Constitution. Poll after poll that came out in the wake of the Court's ruling consistently showed that Americans from across every demographic cross-section overwhelmingly opposed the decision and supported efforts to strengthen property rights protections.

Although Susette's story is probably the most infamous case of eminent domain abuse, it is by no means an isolated case. Every day across this country, Americans are forced to sit back and watch powerlessly as their homes, small businesses, family farms, and churches are bulldozed to make way for high-end condos, shopping malls, and other upscale developments.

Oftentimes, after Americans go through the trauma of losing their private property to eminent domain abuse, the planned private economic development doesn't even occur. In New London, for instance, the Fort Trumbull redevelopment project never got off the ground. After spending close to $80 million in taxpayer money, there has been no new construction, and the neighborhood where Susette Kelo's little pink house was located is now a barren field, overrun by weeds.

It is time for Congress finally to step in and do its part to rein in eminent domain abuse by passing the Private Property Rights Protection Act. I want to thank Mr. SENSENBRENNER for reintroducing this legislation. He and I have worked together on this issue for many years, and I am pleased that this legislation incorporates many provisions from legislation I helped introduce in the 109th Congress, the STOPP Act.

Specifically, the Private Property Rights Protection Act prohibits State and local governments that receive Federal economic development funds from using economic development as a justification for taking property from one person and giving it to another private entity. Any State or local government that violates this prohibition will be ineligible to receive Federal economic development funds for a period of 2 years.

Moreover, this legislation grants adversely affected landowners the right to use appropriate legal remedies to enforce the provisions of the bill. In addition, it allows State and local governments to cure violations by giving the property back to the original owner. No one should have to live in fear of the government snatching up their home, farm, church, or small business. As the Institute for Justice has observed:

> Using eminent domain so another richer, better-connected person may live or work on the land you used to own tells Americans that their hopes, dreams, and hard work do not matter as much as money and political influence. The use of eminent domain for private development has no place in a country built on traditions of independence, hard work, and protection of property rights.

This bill creates incentives for State and local governments to help ensure that eminent domain abuse does not occur in the future. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 1944, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in Kelo v. City of New London, I have been concerned that States and municipalities could use this decision to expand their power of eminent domain, whether for the benefit of private parties or for public projects, to the detriment of those who are least powerful in the community.

While I believe the power of eminent domain has been abused, particularly against those lacking economic or political power, in the 9 years since the Kelo decision, States have properly addressed the issue on their own, and we should respect their judgment rather than impose this awkward, one-size-fits-all Federal legislative response.

I have reached this conclusion for several reasons. The first and foremost is that it is important to note that in Kelo, the Supreme Court acknowledged that State courts may interpret their own eminent domain powers in a manner that is actually more protective of property rights. I am, therefore, encouraged that no fewer than 43 States have followed that advice and taken steps to restrict their own powers of eminent domain to guard against abuse.

□ 1645

Given the fact that our system of federalism appears to be working and that the States have already enacted legal protections that are needed to prevent abuse of eminent domain power, I do not believe that Federal intervention is necessary or appropriate at this time.

Second, the bill's enforcement provisions are very troubling. A jurisdiction found in violation of this legislation would be stripped of all Federal economic development funds for 2 years, which could have a devastating impact on its financial health.

The Supreme Court has long held that, ''when Congress attaches conditions to a State's acceptance of Federal funds, the conditions must be set out 'unambiguously.''' But the term ''Federal economic development funds'' is, in fact, ambiguous and could conceivably include transportation, housing, and all kinds of significant Federal funding.

Those who could bear the heaviest burden of cuts and programs like the Community Development Block Grants could be precisely the same communities that have suffered the most under the abuse of eminent domain power in the past, that is, the powerless in our communities.

Furthermore, the impact of this legislation could be severe, even if a city or State never exercised the power of eminent domain. That is because no lender could ignore the risk of a future administration violating this legislation by using them in a domain for a prohibited purpose and, consequently, facing the devastating penalties during the life of the bond, thereby affecting the city's ability to make the payments on the bond.

This bill gives no discretion and no flexibility with respect to the penalty. It fails to take into account the severity or magnitude of the violation, so even a small violation would have to result in a complete loss of all economic development funds for 2 years.

No matter how clean a city's record may be, the danger that some future violation would have such a devastating effect could negatively impact its bond rating.

Finally, against this backdrop, we need to remember that eminent domain has a long and shameful history

of disproportionately impacting foreign minority communities.

Inner-city neighborhoods that lacked institutional and political power were often designated as blighted areas slated for redevelopment through urban renewal programs. Properties were condemned, and land was turned over to private developers.

That abuse was not confined to the use of eminent domain for economic development purposes. Many of those abuses would still be allowed under this bill. You can trace the cost of any major highway in America to see where poor and minority communities were located. You can map political power, where it is and where it isn't, by the proposed route of the Keystone pipeline today.

This bill does nothing to protect property owners like the witness who testified before the House Judiciary Committee about how her property was taken to benefit the foreign corporation building that pipeline.

The bill does not even give property owners the right to sue to stop an illegal taking in the first place. Suits can only be brought after the property is taken, after it is too late. Despite the draconian penalties in the bill, the actual property owner would get nothing.

This underscores why it is important that we continue to monitor the facts on the ground to determine whether Federal action is warranted. If so, what effective action should be taken?

If the States fail to protect our citizens, Congress should remain ready, willing, and able to do so. However, as the States have already acted to curb reviews, we in Congress should allow them to maintain their authority to act.

Even if you believe the bill achieves the correct balance between State authority and Federal intervention and prohibits the inappropriate use of eminent domain, the irrational penalties it imposes and the fact that individual property owners are not even protected still require that the bill be defeated.

I urge my colleagues to oppose the legislation and reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time, it is my pleasure to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), the chairman of the Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations Subcommittee, and the chief sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House of Representatives today is considering H.R. 1944, the Private Property Rights Protection Act, as part of Stop Government Abuse Week. My bill aims to restore the property rights of all Americans the Supreme Court took away 9 years ago.

The Founders of our country recognized the importance of an individual's right to personal property when they drafted the Constitution. The Fifth Amendment states, ''nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.''

In Kelo v. the City of New London, in a 5–4 decision, the Supreme Court decided that economic development can be a public use under the Fifth Amendment's Takings Clause. The Court held that the government could take private property from an owner to help a corporation or a private developer.

The now infamous Kelo decision was met with swift and strong opposition. As former Justice O'Connor stated, ''Government now has license to transfer property from those with fewer resources to those with more. The Founders cannot have intended this perverse result.''

In the nearly 9 years since Kelo, polls show that Americans overwhelmingly oppose property being taken and transferred to another private owner, even if it is for a public economic good.

Groups including the AARP and NAACP oppose Kelo, noting that, ''the takings that result [from the Court's decision] will disproportionately affect and harm the economically disadvantaged and, in particular, racial and ethnic minorities and the elderly.''

Representatives of religious organizations have stated that, ''Houses of worship and other religious institutions are, by their very nature, nonprofit and almost universally tax-exempt. These fundamental characteristics of religious institutions render their property singularly vulnerable to being taken under the rationale approved by the Supreme Court.''

Should the government be able to close churches if it prefers malls?

The Private Property Rights Protection Act is needed to restore to all Americans the property rights the Supreme Court took away. Although several States have independently passed legislation to limit their power of eminent domain, the supreme courts of Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio have barred the practice under State constitutions. These laws exist on a varying degree.

H.R. 1944 would prohibit State and local governments that receive Federal economic development funds from using economic development as a justification for taking property from one person and giving it to another private entity.

Any State or local government that violates this prohibition will be ineligible to receive Federal economic development funds for 2 years.

The protection of property rights is one of the most important tenets of our government.

I am mindful of the long history of eminent domain abuses, particularly in low-income and often predominantly minority neighborhoods, and the need to stop it.

I am also mindful of the reasons we should allow the government to take land when the way in which the land is being used constitutes an immediate threat to public health and safety. I believe this bill accomplishes both goals.

I urge my colleagues to join me in protecting property rights for all Americans and limiting the dangerous effects of the Kelo decision on the most vulnerable in society.

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

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

I have in my hand bits of the few remaining bricks from the foundation of Susette Kelo's home in New London, Connecticut. They were picked up at the site just over a year ago.

They once supported the lovingly arranged sanctuary of a woman who raised five sons and put herself through nursing school by working as an emergency medical technician. They gave her a place to rest after a long day's work surrounded by the things that meant the most to her. They were the foundations of her castle until the government's bulldozers arrived.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Kelo's home, known as the ''little pink house,'' was reduced to rubble—this rubble—by the government's abuse of eminent domain and has remained just that—rubble.

These bits of bricks serve as a stark reminder of the government's inability to plan people's lives better than they can plan them themselves. They are the dramatic result of a type of government abuse that should never be rewarded with Federal taxpayer dollars. The homes that hardworking Americans have earned should be protected from government abuse, and we here in the people's House have a duty to do just that.

I had the opportunity to meet Susette Kelo. To me, she is a genuine American hero, fighting all the way to the United States Supreme Court to protect her little pink house and to protect all of our Fifth Amendment rights under the United States Constitution.

To me, the failure of the Court to correctly rule on that eminent domain case cries out for the Congress to correctly rule on this abuse by passing Mr. SENSENBRENNER's bill, by passing the Private Property Rights Protection Act.

As has been noted, 43 States have acted to protect eminent domain rights. Isn't it time for the United States Congress to do the same?

I urge my colleagues to support the Private Property Rights Protection Act, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MULVANEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1944, the Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2013.

This legislation addresses the eminent domain practice of seizing private property for the ''public benefit'' of economic development, which was deemed constitutional by the United States Supreme Court in its decision in Kelo v. City of New London. This bill prohibits a state or local government from seizing private property for

economic development if that state or local government receives federal economic development funds, and prohibits the federal government from exercising eminent domain powers for economic development purposes.

While it has not received much attention or debate in the full House of Representatives, my colleagues on the Committee on Financial Services and I have become increasingly concerned about a new proposed use of eminent domain which would be incredibly destructive to our housing markets and to Main Street investors alike.

Dozens of communities across the country are considering a vulture fund-developed investment scheme by which the municipality's eminent domain power is used to acquire underwater—but otherwise performing—mortgage loans held by private-label mortgage-backed securities and then refinance those loans through programs administered by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).

Our housing finance system depends on private capital to take risk, make loans, purchase mortgage-backed securities, and help millions of Americans fulfill the dream of homeownership. What this eminent domain scheme considers would be incredibly destructive to the finance of homeownership and would do little more than help a few homeowners who can already afford their mortgage and line the pockets of the investors who developed this proposal. Who would invest in a mortgage knowing that their investment could be stolen just a few months or years later? Ironically, this new risk to the housing finance system would freeze the return of private capital to our markets at a time when many in Congress are looking for ways to increase the role of the private sector and decrease the federal government's footprint.

Using eminent domain in this manner will hurt Main Street investors the most. Those investors and pensioners may be invested in mortgages sitting in communities considering this plan—like Richmond, California—and not even know it. They are the ones who will suffer the most from this particular form of eminent domain.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER's legislation shines a spotlight on the abusive uses of eminent domain, including this investment scheme, and I am proud to support the bill. I believe this legislation may have the effect of defeating such a scheme. In addition, I support Chairman HENSARLING's efforts to directly target and defeat this use of eminent domain, and I look forward to future opportunities to ensure the protection of private property and the security of our housing finance system.

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1944, the Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2013. Unfortunately, I was delayed in returning to Washington and, regrettably, but want to take this opportunity to note its importance.

When we hear the words "eminent domain," we often visualize the government taking a home, an office building, or a piece of land, often for a highway or some other public infrastructure. But my colleague Mr. SENSENBRENNER articulated well in his remarks that the powers of eminent domain are sometimes used for very different purposes.

One abuse of eminent domain that I have long been publicly against is the use of eminent domain to seize mortgage notes from investors, using the courts to unilaterally restructure the terms of those loans before selling them to other investors. In this scheme, some private investors have their investments seized and incur losses while other private investors benefit. Many of the investors who will incur losses are the savers and retirees who own them through their 401(k), IRA, or pension accounts. But ultimately, this is a blatant abrogation of private property rights and undermines longstanding contract law. As a response, I have introduced H.R. 2733, which prohibits Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Housing Administration from making, purchasing, or guaranteeing loans in areas where eminent domain is being used to seize mortgage notes. This legislation is also included in the Protecting American Taxpayers and Homeowners (PATH) Act.

I believe that property rights, whether real property or the financial instruments that finance them, should be protected. Doing so will give certainty to the housing finance system, which is necessary to transition from a system dominated by government-guaranteed mortgages to one based on private capital.

The Private Property Rights Protection Act of 2013 is not the only legislation to address the issue of abusive eminent domain practices. Section 407 of the Consolidated Appropriation Act of 2014, Pub. L. No. 113–76, prohibits the expenditure of federal funds to support activities that utilize eminent domain powers, unless it's exclusively for a public purpose. The schemes being considered call for the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to guarantee the seized and restructured mortgage loans. Given that some private investors and their paid intermediaries stand to benefit, it is apparent that FHA is unable to participate in these restructuring programs, so long as eminent domain powers are used. With this provision signed into law just last month, Congress and the President have already begun to define the limits of acceptable usage of eminent domain.

I thank Mr. SENSENBRENNER for his important work on this issue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1944.

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. SENSENBRENNER. 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.

TAXPAYER TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENT AUDIT ACT

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2530) to improve transparency and efficiency with respect to audits and communications between taxpayers and the Internal Revenue Service, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2530

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 ''Taxpayer Transparency and Efficient Audit Act''.

SEC. 2. DEADLINE FOR RESPONSES TO TAXPAYER CORRESPONDENCE.

Not later than 30 days after receiving any written correspondence from a taxpayer, the Internal Revenue Service shall provide a substantive written response. For purposes of the preceding sentence, an acknowledgment letter shall not be treated as a substantive response.

SEC. 3. TAXPAYER NOTIFICATION OF DISCLOSURES BY IRS OF TAXPAYER INFORMATION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 days after disclosing any taxpayer information to any agency or instrumentality of Federal, State, or local government, the Internal Revenue Service shall provide a written notification to the taxpayer describing—

(1) the information disclosed,

(2) to whom it was disclosed, and

(3) the date of disclosure.

(b) EXCEPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not apply if the Secretary of the Treasury, or the Secretary's designee, determines that such notification would be detrimental to an ongoing criminal investigation or pose a risk to national security.

SEC. 4. DEADLINE FOR CONCLUSION OF AUDITS OF INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYERS.

If any audit of a tax return of an individual by the Internal Revenue Service is not concluded before the end of the1-year period beginning on the date of the initiation of such audit, the Internal Revenue Service shall provide the taxpayer a written letter explaining why such audit has taken more than 1 year to complete.

SEC. 5. NO ADDITIONAL FUNDS AUTHORIZED.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out the requirements of this Act. Such requirements shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized or appropriated.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BENTIVOLIO). Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

H.R. 2530, the Taxpayer Transparency and Efficient Audit Act, is a direct response to testimony and inquiries and news reports that the Ways and Means

Committee and other interested Members of Congress have heard about as it relates to the IRS scandal.

Part of the difficulty that American taxpayers have, Mr. Speaker, is that they feel that they are basically on their heels, that the Internal Revenue Service has all the power and has all the inertia and has all the momentum; and if you are a taxpayer and the IRS is coming after you, you feel as if, look, this is a one-way street, and they are able to target, and they are able to focus, and they are able to keep all this momentum and have us on our heels.

This is an effort to correct this problem. Every time the IRS shares a taxpayer's information, the IRS, under this bill, must send a disclosure letter to the taxpayer within 30 days of the disclosure, except in cases where it would be detrimental to an ongoing criminal investigation or to national security.

□ 1700

Whenever the IRS receives correspondence from a taxpayer, the IRS must substantively respond within 30 days, and the response can't simply be a pat on the head and an acknowledgment letter but a substantive reply. Finally, the bill creates the goal that audits should be completed within 1 year. If not, the IRS must send an explanation to the taxpayer as to why it took too long.

In a nutshell, Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do is to put the IRS on notice that they have got an obligation to operate within certain timeframes, which is a 30-day substantive response; to finish an audit in a year and, if you can't finish it in a year, have a good explanation as to why; and then also to make sure that, if information is being disclosed to someone outside the IRS—again, outside the context of a criminal investigation or of a national security incident—the IRS has to disclose that to the taxpayer.

Now, you might be thinking, Wow, what in the world? That is against the law already, and this information shouldn't be shared outside the Internal Revenue Service. You would be right in thinking that.

The problem is we heard testimony—and it was very compelling testimony, Mr. Speaker—from a witness down in Texas, who described this experience. Her name was Catherine Engelbrecht, and she was the founder of an organization called True the Vote. This is somebody who decided to participate in public life, who decided to get organized and have a group. Lo and behold, over a period of time, once she decided that she was going to petition the Federal Government for status for her group True the Vote to be involved in election issues and ballot integrity issues, all of a sudden, she finds herself the subject of a great deal of interest from other elements of the Federal Government that have nothing to do with the tax inquiry. According to my information, she had 15 different visits from four different Federal agencies.

We may never get to the bottom of where it came from—where the leak took place—what was the theory behind it and how all of that came to pass, but we know this: we know that we can do something about it. We know that we can put limitations on the Internal Revenue Service that create a duty and an obligation and a legal sanction around which the IRS has to operate that says you cannot disclose this information and that, if this information is disclosed, you have a duty to let the taxpayer know.

Clearly, what we are trying to do with this legislation is to limit the Internal Revenue Service, not from collecting taxes, not from enforcing the law, not from doing the things that they are tasked and created by this body to do, but, instead, to do it in a limited fashion, to be wise, not to be abusive, not to be lording power over taxpayers. When it all comes down to it, let's not forget this: we have a system of taxation that is based on—what? It is based on voluntary compliance. The Federal Government does not have the ability to go about and do all of this enforcement. So a voluntary tax compliance system is presumed.

What does that mean?

That means that the taxpayer has to have confidence that the tax-paying institution, itself, has integrity. As we know, that integrity is seriously in question, so I urge the favorable consideration of H.R. 2530.

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

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I am pleased to join my colleague from Illinois in the discussion and debate of H.R. 2530, the Taxpayer Transparency and Efficient Audit Act.

Since 2010, the Internal Revenue Service's total budget has declined by 8 percent. This may not sound like much except that the number of individual tax returns has gone up by 11 percent, and the number of business tax returns has gone up by 23 percent. What happens when you combine a larger workload with fewer employees? You get more unanswered mail, more unreturned phone calls, and the closing of taxpayer assistance centers around the country.

I recently had the pleasure of welcoming the new Internal Revenue Service Commissioner, John Koskinen, to the Ways and Means Committee. He painted a very bleak picture of the challenges the agency is facing.

Over the same 4-year period that the Internal Revenue Service's budget has been slashed, the number of phone calls the agency receives has gone up by 40 percent. Over 100 million calls were placed by taxpayers to the Internal Revenue Service last year, and nearly 20 million of those calls went unanswered because the IRS did not have enough employees to answer them.

The Internal Revenue Service's ability to process taxpayer correspondence has taken a similar hit. The IRS tries to respond to taxpayer correspondence within 45 days. During the final week of fiscal year 2013, the IRS was unable to process 53 percent of its letters within the 45-day timeframe, and the open inventory of unanswered letters stood at 1.1 million.

Mr. Speaker, the bill before us requires the Internal Revenue Service to provide written responses to taxpayers within 30 days. That is simply an impossibility given the current funding levels. The Republicans can't have it both ways.

You can't both complain about the IRS' not answering its mail within 30 days and then demand that its budget be cut at the same time.

Of course, the Internal Revenue Service would have more resources to spend on taxpayers if they were not wasting time and money responding to the Republicans' infinite document request. According to the latest letter from the Internal Revenue Service, dated February 7, 2014, over 150 IRS personnel have worked for a total of more than 79,000 hours to respond to ongoing congressional investigations. They have produced more than a half a million pages of documents, have had more than 60 transcribed interviews taken of IRS employees, and have answered questions at 14 congressional hearings.

Enough is enough. It is time for the Internal Revenue Service to get back to its primary mission of administering taxpayer services.

Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned about the provision in the bill that calls for audits to be completed within 1 year. This will create an incentive for criminals to try and delay any audit or investigation by the Internal Revenue Service to try and ''run out the clock'' so that they can avoid their taxes. We would not say that if you can avoid a criminal investigation for 1 year that your crime will be forgiven. So why would we say that for cheating on your taxes? Our constituents expect us to provide a level playing field when it comes to the Tax Code, and the Republicans should not tilt that playing field towards tax cheats in the pursuit of their November preelection strategy.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that all of this legislation designed to hurt the Internal Revenue Service instead places the burden most directly on the elderly, the poor, and the disabled. They are the ones who are most likely to need the services from the Internal Revenue Service that they can no longer find. This is not just a problem for the Internal Revenue Service or for taxpayers but also for this Congress. When our constituents cannot get the help they need and deserve from a Federal agency, they turn to us. It is not just the Commissioner who has called for more resources but also the IRS Oversight Board, the Taxpayer Advocate, and the Treasury inspector general.

I am hopeful that this Congress will listen. These are our constituents who need us.

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

Mr. ROSKAM. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we are accused now of wanting to have it both ways. I suppose we are guilty as charged. We have an expectation that the Internal Revenue Service is going to work well with the resources that they have been appropriated and be able to be responsive to inquiries, but it is an important distinction because we are saying that the IRS has to respond at the same level at which they demand responses from the taxpayer.

So, when you get a letter at home from the Internal Revenue Service, there is nobody who is cavalier about that. What happens? You look at that. My constituents look at that. The business owners in my district—the small businesses in my district—look at something from the Internal Revenue Service, and they say, Stop the presses. Wow, we have got to stop everything. The IRS is coming in, and we have got to deal with this. Get on top of it.

Yet we are told that the Internal Revenue Service cannot be held to that same standard, to that same level of responsiveness that the IRS demands from American citizens—demands with the ability to fine, demands with the ability to imprison if necessary, demands with the ability to take your property away through the force of liens.

I think the IRS can handle it. I think the IRS is now recognizing, hey, there is something that is going on, and the American public is recognizing that what has actually happened is that they have delegated a great deal of authority to the Internal Revenue Service. With the way our Founders created our system, Mr. Speaker, now these citizens are saying, We want to reclaim the authority. Why? Because the authority has been abused.

You are going to be limited, Internal Revenue Service, based on this legislation and other legislation because you abused this.

This is not about the poor. This is not about the elderly. This is not about the disabled. Those arguments are not very persuasive. This is about the limitation of the long arm of the Federal Government being able to hold you to account and my constituents to account to a standard that they are unwilling to live by themselves. That is just wrong.

So do we want it both ways? Yes, we do. We want the Internal Revenue Service to be wise with the money that has been allocated to them, and we want them to be forthcoming and helpful when it comes to responding in the same way to which they have been responded.

Now, my distinguished colleague from Illinois has mentioned the consternation and hand-wringing that has come upon the Internal Revenue Service. Here is a fairly simple remedy, Mr. Speaker:

The Internal Revenue Service can be forthcoming. They can say, Here is the information, to the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, that you have requested. The chairman of the Ways and Means Committee has requested documentation, particularly about Lois Lerner, who is at the heart of this investigation.

Has the Internal Revenue Service been forthcoming to give Lois Lerner's emails? The answer is ''no.'' It is difficult. It is one excuse after another. ''We are looking.'' ''We are searching.'' It is all of these sorts of ''the dog ate my homework'' responses.

Here is the simple remedy:

If it has taken too much time, if it is that big of a problem, if it is taking all of this energy that they want to devote to helping taxpayers that, instead, they are spending devoting to defending themselves in an investigation, save a lot of time—print out the emails, and send them to Chairman DAVE CAMP. That is how they can save time, and that is how they can save money.

By golly, we have got to get to a point where this agency is under control and is doing the right thing by those who have entrusted them with a great deal of authority.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time and am prepared to close. I will end with just two things.

I certainly appreciate the instructions as well as the passion from my colleague from Illinois, and I want every agency of our government to be as efficient as it possibly can and should be.

One of the things that we have learned is that you can't get blood out of a turnip.

□ 1715

You can squeeze it; you can tease it; you can do everything to it that you want to, but it will still end up being blood.

The other thing that I will end with is this month we celebrate African American History Month. I am reminded of something that Frederick Douglass said:

> In this world, we may not get everything that we pay for, but we most certainly must pay for everything that we get.

I maintain that we must have the adequate resources that are needed for employees to do their jobs in a timely and efficient manner. And so I appreciate the comments of my colleague. I appreciate his passion.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Illinois (Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS) for his willingness to come and debate this issue. I appreciate his admonition about Frederick Douglass and that whole notion that we need to pay for what we get, and I think that that is a good word on which to end.

In other words, the American public has an expectation that they are going to get something, and they are paying for it. They are paying for it in taxes that, in some cases, are confiscatory—a very, very high tax burden—and they are voluntarily complying with the Tax Code. And toward that end, they have the expectation that they are going to be treated courteously, that they are going to be treated with respect, and that they are not going to be subsequently targeted by some other Federal agency completely unrelated to their inquiring.

So I urge the passage of H.R. 2530, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2530, 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.

PROTECTING TAXPAYERS FROM INTRUSIVE IRS REQUESTS ACT

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2531) to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from asking taxpayers questions regarding religious, political, or social beliefs.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2531

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 ''Protecting Taxpayers from Intrusive IRS Requests Act''.

SEC. 2. PROHIBITION ON QUESTIONS REGARDING RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, OR SOCIAL BELIEFS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Internal Revenue Service shall not ask any taxpayer any question regarding religious, political, or social beliefs.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING EXCEPTIONS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) any exceptions to subsection (a) which are provided by later enacted provisions of law should identify the specific questions which are authorized, the class of taxpayers to which such questions are authorized to be asked, and the circumstances under which such questions are authorized to be asked, and

(2) if the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service determines that asking any class of taxpayers a question prohibited under subsection (a) would aid in the efficient administration of the tax laws, such Commissioner should submit a report to Congress which—

(A) includes such question in the verbatim form in which it is to be asked,

(B) describes the class of taxpayers to whom the question is to be asked, and

(C) describes the circumstances that would be required to exist before the question would be asked.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) and the gentleman

from Illinois (Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROSKAM. 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 the subject of the bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

I draw your attention to H.R. 2531, the Protecting Taxpayers from Intrusive IRS Requests Act. Let me give you a quick summary, Mr. Speaker, of what the bill does. Let me give you an example that we heard in the Ways and Means Committee that prompted this. And I look forward to hearing from my colleague, Mr. DAVIS.

The legislation establishes a new procedure for the IRS to follow when asking questions regarding three areas: religious, political, and social beliefs. And the following is the new procedure: the IRS can't ask those questions. They can't ask about religious, political, or social beliefs. And there are two exceptions. One is a question or set of questions that is approved by Congress by an enacted law; or, if the IRS Commissioner deems questions are important to aid in tax administration and submits a report to Congress, which must include the following and be approved by a joint resolution of Congress:

State the specific questions that were authorized;

Describe the class of taxpayers who will be asked the questions;

Describe the circumstances surrounding the taxpayers being asked those questions.

So where is this coming from? What is this all about?

We heard testimony from six witnesses, Mr. Speaker, who came before the Ways and Means Committee as the IRS scandal was breaking. These six witnesses in particular I found to be compelling. I found them to be compelling for two reasons:

Number one, they didn't give up on their country. When they were being targeted by the Federal Government, these witnesses kept faith and kept hope with the America that they knew existed, and they were not willing to feel overwhelmed even though the events were actually fairly overwhelming, being targeted by your Federal Government to say you can and cannot participate in the public square. That is one reason I admire them.

The second reason, Mr. Speaker, was this. They came to Washington to do something about it. They engaged Congress. They engaged in the full committee. They gave compelling testimony. The testimony moved us. It moved me to introduce this bill.

Here was the single, without question, most compelling witness who spoke that day, in my view. She represented a right-to-life group in Iowa. She told the story of being asked by the Internal Revenue Service in written interrogatories—in other words, pieces of paper with questions written down that come from the Internal Revenue Service to their little group—and the inquiry was, Tell us about your prayers. Tell us about your prayer meetings. What goes on at those?

Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I do that our freedom to worship is our first freedom, and our freedom to worship is central to who we are.

The long, powerful arm of the Federal Government is coming in and grabbing a little right-to-life group by the neck and shaking them around, saying, Write down what happens in your prayer meetings and write it down and sign your name, under penalty of perjury. That is exactly what those questions did.

I was sobered by that. That was chastening testimony to hear that this agency, this agency of delegated authority from the people's House, has now used that and, I would argue, misused that. Why in the world does the Internal Revenue Service need to know about the prayer meetings of a pro-life group in Iowa? That is a shameful abuse and a shameful scandal that they even asked those questions.

But what does it tell you?

It tells you that there was a way of thinking, a culture, I would argue, at the Internal Revenue Service that said, We are empowered to do these things.

Well, if that is what they think, let's correct that, shall we, Mr. Speaker? Let's say that they can't ask those questions. The questions about religion, your political beliefs, and about what your social beliefs are have nothing to do with what the Internal Revenue Service should be doing as it relates to tax administration.

So these are very clear limitations. There are a couple of exceptions. But it is meant clearly to put the IRS back where they belong on the tax administration side and not deciding who gets to participate in the public square of debate and who doesn't.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Coming from the same and neighboring communities and State as my colleague, we agree on many things. We all agree that the Internal Revenue Service should not ask about your religious, political, or social beliefs in determining your taxpayer status. That is different, however, from asking you about your political activities, which was at the root of the Internal Revenue Service's mismanagement of the 501(c)(4) applications.

The IRS did the right thing in trying to group together applications by activity, but they were wrong in using party names and labels from both Democrats and Republicans in their organizational process.

The division that was the subject of the May 2013 TIGTA report was grossly mismanaged in that it allowed these applications to be selected by name and then allowed them to sit for an inordinate length of time. Swift corrective action was taken to remove the ineffective management, and the subsequent IRS leadership has put the agency on the right path to restoring the public trust.

There has never been any evidence of political motivation or influence from anyone either inside or outside the IRS. Treasury's inspector general repeatedly testified that he found no evidence of political motivation in the selection of processing of tax exemption applications that were the subject of his report. Indeed, an extensive review of 5,500 employee emails by the TIGTA Office of Investigations concluded that there was no political motivation in trying to group these applications.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, what we saw was a small division of a very large agency that struggled to determine how to handle tax-exempt applications from politically motivated groups. Consequently, they allowed those applications to sit for an inordinate amount of time while it tried to determine what criteria to use to judge who determined tax-exempt status.

We also had a flawed TIGTA report that deliberately removed any reference to Progressive and Democratic groups from the criteria the IRS actually used to group applications together and consequently presented a one-sided and partisan conclusion about this issue to Congress.

What we do not have is any evidence of political motivation in the processing of tax exemption applications or any evidence of outside influence in the selection or processing of tax exemption applications.

Mr. Speaker, I think enough is enough. It is time for us to move on to processing issues like extending long-term unemployment insurance benefits, raising the minimum wage, and fixing our immigration laws. Let us give the American people some confidence that their Congress can debate and pass bills on these important issues.

Yes, there was activity that took place which is unacceptable. The individuals have been removed from those positions. Let us take the Internal Revenue Service and move it on to higher heights, giving the American people that each and every citizen is treated fairly, with respect, and with the dignity that all of us deserve as citizens of this great Nation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

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

My colleague said enough is enough. I guess enough is enough if you are one of the ones that wasn't impacted. But if you were impacted by the IRS targeting, it had a jarring effect on you.

And if we are going to move forward, if we are going to have the Internal Revenue Service have the respect that we need it to have, which it doesn't have right now, there is an overwhelming level of concern and consternation about how the IRS handled these things in the past and how they conducted themselves.

The fact that the Internal Revenue Service has not been forthcoming pursuant to Chairman CAMP's request for information is not in dispute. There is nobody here that is arguing the IRS has been completely forthcoming and given the chairman all the information he needs or that he has requested. No. They haven't been forthcoming, and that continues to be a real problem.

I think it is important for us to recognize that the TIGTA report was an audit. It was not an investigation. An investigation is ongoing. So this notion that there is no knowledge or there is no indication of any sort of political influence, I think that there is a great deal of knowledge of political influence that was peddled and used here, and I think the facts bear it out.

□ 1730

The scope of the audit that the gentleman was referring to was to focus on conservative targeting. The IG struck within the parameters of the audit. Far more conservative groups faced IRS scrutiny, they faced more questions, and were approved at a lower rate than progressive groups were.

Numbers are very straightforward: 104 conservative groups experienced an average of 15 additional questions, only 46 percent of conservative applicants were approved, and 56 percent of groups are either waiting for a determination or have withdrawn in frustration.

Now, that is messed up. If you are withdrawing because you can't get a straight answer, you are just feeling overwhelmed, who wins then?

The Internal Revenue Service wins, and the taxpayer that wants to participate in the public debate loses.

Compare that to seven progressive groups that were asked an average of just five additional questions.

You know what, Mr. Speaker?

Every one of those progressive groups was approved—100 percent of them were approved.

We know now that the IRS targeted not only right-leaning applicants, but also right-leaning groups that are already operating as 501(c)(4)s, and at Washington, D.C.'s direction, not Cincinnati's initiative, at Washington, D.C.'s direction, dozens of groups operating as 501(c)(4)s were flagged for IRS surveillance, monitoring of the groups' activities, Web sites, and any other publicly available information.

Of these groups, 83 percent were right-leaning, and of the groups that the IRS selected for audit, 100 percent of those were conservative-leaning. So, this idea that this was, well, everybody is treated the same way, the facts don't bear that out, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to draw attention to one particular group, a constituency that I represent, the West Suburban Patriots of DuPage County. They submitted their application for 501(c)(4) status in May of 2011. They received a letter from the IRS acknowledging their application. Nearly 4 months later they were told their application was ''in the pile.''

Over a year later, June of 2012, the West Suburban Patriots received a letter indicating that they had to answer a series of questions in an incredibly short timeframe. The questions were political, and demonstrated that the IRS scoured their Web site by demanding information that would be on their Members Only web page.

Isn't that interesting?

In July of 2012 they received a letter granting their 501(c)(4) status.

Now, the West Suburban Patriots name and tax ID number were found on a list of ''political advocacy cases'' that the Exempt Organizations Office in D.C. made to track Tea Party cases, and USA Today received the confidential political advocacy list and made it public.

Here is the point: this is not what the Internal Revenue Service should be doing. The Internal Revenue Service should be making proper inquiries, not asking about prayer meetings, not being passive aggressive, choosing winners and losers in the public square.

This is an important piece of legislation. It reclaims authority that was once delegated and has been abused, and now needs to be reclaimed.

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

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

You know, I think with the IRS, we are, like, approaching a fork in the middle of the road and we have choices that we can make.

We now have new leadership. The agency has been sanitized. The individuals with culpability are no longer there. They no longer play in any leadership roles at all.

The new Commissioner has given us every assurance, and he comes to the IRS with an impeccable record from both public and private activity, and has given every assurance that can be given that he is going to take that road that leads to the highest level of integrity, that we can bank on the Internal Revenue Service being as fair as fair can be.

I like to believe that he means what he says, and that he says what he means. So I am confident that we have a new IRS, and we will see it function with a new light, a new spirit, and a new direction.

So I thank my colleague. I have no further requests for time.

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

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

I want to thank Mr. DAVIS for engaging in this debate and this discussion, and I think he is right. We are at a fork in the road. I would describe the fork in the road as the responsibility that we have in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge us to take this challenge, and that is to do everything that we can, in light of this information that has come to our attention, to make sure that the Internal Revenue Service is being limited, is not allowed to ask questions regarding religion or social questions or political questions, and that we can enjoy a day in the future when they enjoy our respect. With that, I urge passage the bill.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2531.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 6:30 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 5 o'clock and 36 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1830

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. TERRY) at 6 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

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

Votes will be taken in the following order:

H.R. 1211, by the yeas and nays;

H.R. 1123, by the yeas and nays.

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

FOIA OVERSIGHT AND IMPLEMENTATION ACT OF 2014

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1211) to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Freedom of Information Act), to provide for greater public access to information, and for other purposes, 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 California (Mr. ISSA) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 410, nays 0, not voting 20, as follows:

[Roll No. 63]

YEAS—410

Aderholt
Amash
Amodei
Bachmann
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Bass
Beatty
Becerra
Benishek
Bentivolio
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Bridenstine
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Broun (GA)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Camp
Cantor
Capito
Capuano
Cárdenas
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Cole
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Courtney
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Cummings
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Danny
Davis, Rodney
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Doggett
Doyle
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Edwards
Ellison
Ellmers
Engel
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gibbs
Gibson
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grijalva
Grimm
Guthrie
Hahn
Hall
Hanabusa
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Higgins
Himes
Hinojosa
Holding
Holt
Honda
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huelskamp
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Jones
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Latta
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis
Lipinski
LoBiondo
Loebsack
Lofgren
Long
Lowenthal
Lowey
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Lynch
Maffei
Maloney, Carolyn
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matheson
Matsui
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Meng
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Mullin
Mulvaney
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nunes
Nunnelee
O'Rourke
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Perry
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Poe (TX)
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rahall
Rangel
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schock
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Slaughter
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Smith (WA)
Southerland
Speier
Stewart
Stivers
Stockman
Stutzman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tierney
Tipton
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Van Hollen
Vargas
Veasey
Vela
Velázquez
Visclosky
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Welch
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yarmuth
Yoder
Yoho
Young (AK)

NOT VOTING—20

Campbell
Capps
Fincher
Gerlach
Gingrey (GA)
Gosar
Graves (MO)
Gutiérrez
Hanna
McCarthy (NY)
Miller, Gary
Nugent
Pastor (AZ)
Richmond
Ruppersberger
Rush
Schwartz
Tiberi
Wilson (FL)
Young (IN)

□ 1900

Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER and Mr. ELLISON changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

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

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

UNLOCKING CONSUMER CHOICE AND WIRELESS COMPETITION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the vote on the motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1123) to promote consumer choice and wireless competition by permitting consumers to unlock mobile wireless devices, and for other purposes, 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 Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended.

This is a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 295, nays 114, not voting 21, as follows:

[Roll No. 64]

YEAS—295

Aderholt
Amodei
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Beatty
Becerra
Benishek
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Blackburn
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Burgess
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Camp
Cantor
Capito
Cárdenas
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cartwright
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chaffetz
Chu
Clarke (NY)
Clay
Cleaver
Coble
Coffman
Cohen
Collins (GA)
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Costa
Cotton
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Crowley
Cuellar
Culberson
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Rodney
DeLauro
DelBene
Denham
Dent
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Duckworth
Duffy
Duncan (TN)
Ellmers
Engel
Fitzpatrick
Fleischmann
Fleming
Flores
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foxx
Frankel (FL)
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Fudge
Gallego
Garcia
Gardner
Garrett
Gibbs
Gohmert
Goodlatte
Gowdy
Granger
Graves (GA)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Hanabusa
Harper
Harris
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Hensarling
Herrera Beutler
Higgins
Hinojosa
Holding
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hunter
Hurt
Israel
Issa
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Jenkins
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Joyce
Kaptur
Kelly (PA)
Kilmer
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Labrador
LaMalfa
Lamborn
Lance
Lankford
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
Latta
Levin
Lewis
LoBiondo
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Lummis
Maffei
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Matheson
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McClintock
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
Meadows
Meehan
Meeks
Messer
Mica
Michaud
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Mullin
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Nadler
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Pallone
Pascrell
Paulsen
Pearce
Perlmutter
Peters (CA)
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Pittenger
Pitts
Poe (TX)
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Runyan
Ryan (OH)
Ryan (WI)
Salmon
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schneider
Schock
Schrader
Schweikert
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)

Southerland
Stewart
Stivers
Stutzman
Terry
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tipton
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vargas
Vela
Velázquez
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Wasserman Schultz
Waxman
Weber (TX)
Webster (FL)
Wenstrup
Westmoreland
Whitfield
Williams
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoder
Young (AK)

NAYS—114

Amash
Bachmann
Bass
Bentivolio
Bishop (GA)
Blumenauer
Bonamici
Brady (PA)
Bridenstine
Broun (GA)
Capuano
Carney
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clyburn
Cole
Courtney
Cummings
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
Delaney
Doggett
Doyle
Duncan (SC)
Edwards
Ellison
Enyart
Eshoo
Esty
Farenthold
Farr
Fattah
Foster
Gabbard
Garamendi
Gibson
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Hahn
Himes
Holt
Honda
Huelskamp
Johnson, E. B.
Jones
Keating
Kelly (IL)
Kennedy
Kildee
Kuster
Langevin
Lee (CA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lynch
Maloney, Carolyn
Massie
Matsui
McCollum
McDermott
McGovern
McNerney
Meng
Miller, George
Moore
Moran
Mulvaney
Napolitano
Neal
Negrete McLeod
O'Rourke
Payne
Pelosi
Perry
Pingree (ME)
Pocan
Polis
Price (NC)
Quigley
Rangel
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Rohrabacher
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Slaughter
Speier
Stockman
Swalwell (CA)
Takano
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Titus
Tonko
Tsongas
Van Hollen
Veasey
Visclosky
Walz
Waters
Welch
Yarmuth
Yoho

NOT VOTING—21

Campbell
Capps
Fincher
Gerlach
Gingrey (GA)
Gosar
Graves (MO)
Gutiérrez
Hanna
McCarthy (NY)
Miller, Gary
Nugent
Pastor (AZ)
Richmond
Ruppersberger
Rush
Schwartz
Smith (WA)
Tiberi
Wilson (FL)
Young (IN)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining.

□ 1909

Ms. CLARKE of New York changed her vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

Mr. SANFORD changed his vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

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

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. GUTIÉRREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent in the House chamber for votes on Tuesday, February 25, 2014.

I would like the record to show that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote 63, and "nay" on rollcall vote 64.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3865, STOP TARGETING OF POLITICAL BELIEFS BY THE IRS ACT OF 2014; PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2804, ALL ECONOMIC REGULATIONS ARE TRANSPARENT ACT OF 2014; AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mr. WOODALL, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 113–361) on the resolution (H. Res. 487) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3865) to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from modifying the standard for determining whether an organization is operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare for purposes of section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2804) to amend title 5, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to publish information about rules on the Internet, and for other purposes; and providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE EXPECT ACCOUNTABILITY.

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

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, this week the House will consider several measures to stop government abuse, especially when it threatens freedom and limits opportunity.

The American people expect accountability, and every day the House is focused on carrying out responsible oversight.

As an example, late on Friday, the Obama administration released a report that we demanded detailing the impact of the health care law and what it will do to employer-sponsored health plans.

You may not have seen the report. It was released rather quietly on Friday afternoon, so I am going to enter it into the RECORD today. I urge every Member to read it and share it with your constituents.

As you do, keep in mind that the White House promised that this law would bring down health insurance premiums by some $2,000 per family. Instead, according to the administration's own bookkeepers, premiums will go up for two out of three small businesses in our country.

This amounts to about 11 million employees who are going to see more money coming out of their paycheck for their health insurance every month, and remember, these premiums will be felt not just by workers, but the small business owners themselves, making it even harder to create jobs.

Another sucker punch to our economy. Another broken promise to hard-working Americans—and the only reason we even know about it is that the House demanded this transparency from the administration.

That is why the House continues to focus on stopping government abuse and promoting better solutions for middle class families and small businesses.

[From Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Feb. 21, 2014]

REPORT TO CONGRESS ON THE IMPACT ON PREMIUMS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WITH EMPLOYER-SPONSORED HEALTH INSURANCE FROM THE GUARANTEED ISSUE, GUARANTEED RENEWAL, AND FAIR HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS PROVISIONS OF THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

INTRODUCTION

The ''Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011'' required this report to Congress on the impact of sections 2701 through 2703 of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act, as amended by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on the premiums paid by individuals and families with employer-sponsored health insurance. Specifically, the Chief Actuary of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is to provide an estimate of the number of individuals and families who will experience a premium increase and the number who will see a decrease as a result of these three provisions.

Section 2701 of PHS Act is titled ''Fair Health Insurance Premiums'' and requires adjusted community rating for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 2014. Specifically, premium rates in the individual and small group market charged for non-grandfathered health insurance coverage may only be varied on the basis of the following four characteristics:

Individual or family enrollment.

Geographic area—premium rates can vary by the area of the country.

Age—premium rates can be higher for an older applicant than that for a younger applicant, but the ratio of premiums cannot exceed 3:1 for adults.

Tobacco use—premium rates can be higher for smokers, but the ratio cannot exceed 1.5:1.

Section 2702 of the PHS Act requires the guaranteed issuance of health insurance coverage in the individual and group market subject to specified exceptions. This means that insurers that offer coverage in the individual or group market generally must accept all applicants for that coverage in that market. Under section 2703 of the PHS Act, group and individual health insurance coverage must be guaranteed renewable at the option of the plan sponsor or individual, subject to specified exceptions. These three sections do not apply to grandfathered health insurance coverage.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the passage of the ACA, the insurance products in the small group market were already required to be guaranteed issue and renewable under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). In addition, large group policies are not subject to section 2701 of the PHS Act. Self-funded plans are also not subject to the provisions analyzed in this report. As a result, large group and self-funded plans will be unaffected by the new rating requirements. Since these three specific ACA provisions will not have any significant effect on the premium rates paid by individuals working for large sized employers, the remainder of this report will focus on health insurance policies in the small group market.

To help individuals with pre-existing conditions gain affordable insurance coverage, Sections 2702 and 2703 of PHS Act generally require guaranteed issuance and renewability of policies to any employer that applies for coverage offered in the applicable market within enrollment periods, regardless of the health histories of its employees or other prohibited factors. These requirements apply to all small group health insurance plans other than grandfathered plans (as defined by federal regulations at 45 CFR 147) beginning on or after January 1, 2014. Some analysts expect that these grandfathered plans will experience reduced enrollment as individuals leave for new plans that are not only cheaper due to lower administrative costs, but also offer more generous coverage, or leave for individual market coverage for which individuals may qualify for premium tax credits. Under HIPAA, all states currently have adopted guaranteed issue and renewal requirements for small group policies.

The Chief Actuary was required to estimate the impact of these three specific ACA provisions—fair health insurance premiums, guaranteed issue and renewability—on the premiums for individuals and families with employer sponsored health insurance. Since fully insured small group policies are already guaranteed issue and renewal in all states, we expect there is no material net impact of these two ACA provisions on premium rates. As a result, the premium rate impact in the small group market is expected to result from only the new adjusted community rating provision in section 2701 of the PHS Act.

ADJUSTED COMMUNITY RATING FOR SMALL EMPLOYERS

This new adjusted community rating criteria is a change from the current small group market industry practice that existed prior to when these criteria take effect. Previously, issuers in most states could vary premiums by factors such as: health status of the group, group size, and industry code or classification. Smaller firms, and those performing high-risk work, or firms with sick employees, received significantly higher premiums than those with a lower risk group. In addition, they could be subject to large premium increases based on a new diagnosis for a single employee.

The ACA created a new health insurance Exchange for small businesses called the SHOP (Small Business Health Options Program), to offer plans tailored for small employers with 100 or fewer employees. All health plans (other than those offered through the SHOP) will be subject to the premium rating requirements of section 2701 of the PHS Act. Beginning 2014, most individuals must obtain a form of minimum essential coverage or face a penalty. Individuals with income between 100 and 400 percent of federal poverty level (FPL) may be eligible for premium tax credits and cost sharing reductions on a sliding scale to help reduce the cost if the coverage is obtained through the Exchanges.

There is considerable uncertainty as to whether small employers will decide to terminate their existing offer of health insurance coverage and send their employees to individual market Exchanges. Many factors may be relevant to their decisions. For example, the decision could depend heavily on the extent to which employees are eligible for a premium tax credit on the individual market Exchanges. Some expect that it would be cheaper for employees with income below 250 percent of FPL to buy coverage from the individual market Exchanges given the premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions available at these income levels. Small employers with predominantly low-wage, part-time and seasonal employees may find it to their financial advantage to terminate existing coverage. Small businesses with 50 or fewer workers may find terminating existing coverage particularly attractive since they are not required by the ACA to offer affordable minimum essential health insurance coverage, and their workers have access to health insurance in the new Exchanges. Alternatively, it may be financially attractive for small employers with relatively healthy employees to continue to provide coverage but convert to a self-insured arrangement with stop-loss coverage. If such coverage becomes widely available, some analysts expect a substantial increase in self-insured small employers. However, small group employers will also have to consider employee resistance and administrative complexity to substitute alternative types of compensation for employer's health benefits contributions, which may encourage small employers to continue to offer insurance coverage on a tax-favored basis.

Prior to 2014, insurers could set lower premiums for small employers with younger and healthier employees due to their low expected health care needs, and significantly higher rates for small employers with older and sicker employees with greater expected health care needs. The ratio of premiums charged between old and young ages was typically 5:1 or more, and could translate into much higher premiums for firms with older employees. In addition, gender could also be used as a rating factor. Before 2014, employers with more women of childbearing age were commonly charged higher premiums.

The adjusted community rating under ACA prohibits the use of gender, health status and claims history as rating factors, and restricts the premium rating ratio for adults to between young and old ages. These changes are expected to further relieve the financial burdens for older and sicker individuals as coverage could become more affordable for them. However, for younger and healthier individuals, premiums could increase since health status is no longer permitted as a rating factor and the new age rating band is limited to 3:1 for adults, less than what insurers typically have used.

Some analysts are concerned with the possibility of adverse selection, which prompts small employers with younger and healthier individuals to drop coverage or switch to other forms of coverage such as self-insurance, leaving the remaining risk pool with only the sickest individuals thereby raising premiums significantly. The propensity for adverse selection is mitigated by other ACA provisions that encourage small employers to offer coverage and premium stabilization programs in the fully insured market such as risk adjustment. For example, small employers with 25 or fewer employees whose average annual salary is less than $50,000 may be eligible for small business tax credit on a sliding scale if they contribute at least 50 percent of the total premium. Many analysts believe that these and other factors will help attract a broad and stable group of employers to reduce the negative impact on premiums and avoid the adverse selection problem.

ESTIMATES BY INDEPENDENT MODELERS

A number of independent modelers developed estimates of post-ACA premium rates and enrollment of small group coverage for a number of states and the country as a whole. For example, some of their findings are summarized below.

Wisconsin—A study by Gorman Actuarial and Dr. Jonathan Gruber predicted that the small group market is expected to see relatively small premium rate increase—1.3 percent. Fifty-three percent of small group plans, or 63 percent of the small group employees, will experience a premium rate increase of 15 percent, while 47 percent of small groups or 37 percent of the employees will experience a 16 percent decrease. Most of the impact is due to elimination of health status as a rating factor.

Maine—A study by Gorman Actuarial and Dr. Jonathan Gruber estimated that a large majority (89 percent) of small employers are expected to experience a premium rate increase of 12 percent on average, while the remaining 11 percent will experience an average premium rate decline of 17 percent. The impact is largely due to the elimination of group size as a rating factor.

Ohio—A study from Milliman estimates that, before the application of tax subsidies, the small group premium rates are going to increase by 5 to 15 percent.

National—Actuaries at Oliver Wyman examined the national impact on premium rates of adjusted community rating, guaranteed issue and renewal using a database of actual claims covering over 6 million people. They predict that the small group premium rates will increase by 20 percent.

OACT ESTIMATES

This analysis focuses on the number of people with health insurance coverage through their employer whose premium rates are expected to increase or decrease as a result of the guaranteed issue, guaranteed renewability, and premium rating provisions of the ACA only. Other factors affecting rates such as changes in product design, provider networks, or competition are not considered. In addition, other provisions of the ACA, including the coverage expansions, the extension of dependent coverage to age 26, the individual mandate, and the employer mandate will impact the availability of coverage, the take-up of that coverage, and the premium rates charged to those who currently have employer-sponsored insurance, but those impacts are not included in this estimate. We prepared a more complete report on the financial effects of the ACA in 2010. As mentioned previously, the effect on large employers is expected to be negligible, therefore our evaluation examines the impact on employees of fully-insured small firms.

In 2012, about 18 million people were enrolled in the small group health insurance market through employers with 50 fewer employees. About 8 percent of small firms offered a self-insured health plan, therefore about 17 million people received coverage in the fully-insured small group health market. These 17 million people will be affected by the new premium rating requirements contained in the ACA. Before the premium rating provision of the ACA took effect, firms with employees who had better than average health risks would typically pay lower premiums, and therefore, they were more likely to be the firms that offer health insurance. As a result, most of people with coverage in the small group market have premium rates that are below average. Based on our review of the available research and discussions with several actuarial experts, we have estimated that roughly 65 percent of small employers offering health insurance coverage have premium rates that are below average.

Once the new premium rating requirements go into effect, it is anticipated that the small employers that offer health insurance coverage to their employees and their families would have average premium rates. Therefore, we are estimating that 65 percent of the small firms are expected to experience increases in their premium rates while the remaining 35 percent are anticipated to have rate reductions. The individuals and families

that receive health insurance coverage from their small employer generally contribute a portion of the premium. For this analysis, if the employer premium increases, it is assumed that the employee contribution will rise as well. Similarly, if the employer premium is reduced, the employee contribution is assumed to decrease. This results in roughly 11 million individuals whose premiums are estimated to be higher as a result of the ACA and about 6 million individuals who are estimated to have lower premiums.

There is a rather large degree of uncertainty associated with this estimate. The impact could vary significantly depending on the mix of firms that decide to offer health insurance coverage. In reality, the employer's decisions to offer coverage will be based on far more factors than the three that are focused on in this report so understanding the effects of just these provisions will always be challenging. Using their Compare model, RAND analyzed the impact of the entire ACA on small group premiums and determined that the effect would be minimal. Further, note that the number of affected individuals will be smaller in 2014 because (i) a number of small group plans were renewed early, and (ii) about half of the states have allowed extensions to their pre-ACA rating rules under the transitional policy announced by CMS on November 14, 2013.

SUMMARY

The Affordable Care Act requires all non-grandfathered health insurance coverage in the individual and group markets to be guaranteed issue and guaranteed renewable. In addition, all non-grandfathered insurance plans and policies in the individual and group markets can vary premium rates based only on age, family status, geography, and tobacco use, and the variation in the age and tobacco use factors is limited. This new premium rating requirement will impact the premiums paid by individuals and families working for small employers who offer health insurance. Specifically, we have estimated that the premium rates for roughly 11 million people will increase and about 6 million people are expected to experience a premium rate reduction due to sections 2701 through 2703 of the PHS Act.

SUPPORT FOR VENEZUELANS

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

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Venezuelans who seek to return liberty, the rule of law, and peace to their beleaguered nation. Over a period of years, the corrupt Cuban-backed Maduro-Chavez government has systematically looted and oppressed the people it purports to serve.

I received an email from a friend today who has spent significant time in Venezuela. He writes:

> Students, tired of the corruption, the crime, the killings, an economy spiraling out of control, a lack of free press, are peacefully demonstrating, per their constitutional right, against the government. The government, instead of protecting the students and others demonstrating, is attacking, arresting, and often killing them.

Mr. Speaker, the death toll is growing; the list of political prisoners is growing. The repressive tactics of the Venezuelan Government cannot be ignored. I call on the administration to act and support Venezuelans who seek simply to secure the blessings of liberty for themselves and their countrymen.

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THE CRISIS IN VENEZUELA

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

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Speaker, as they have for weeks, thousands of Venezuelans continue to risk their lives, taking to the streets in protest of their failed government. The people of Venezuela have seen their economy collapse, family members kidnapped, friends murdered.

While they plead for a better future for their country, the government brutally attacks its own citizens and clamps down on basic freedoms. This is not a democracy, and no conscientious nation should remain silent.

It is our responsibility to make sure the world knows full well what is happening in Venezuela, and that the Venezuelan government is accountable for these blatant violations of universal democratic principles.

As the protesters' latest motto goes, ''El que se cansa pierde''—he who tires, loses. The fight for freedom, justice, and human rights will never, never die.

THE CASE OF LEOPOLDO LOPEZ

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, it is right and fitting for the United States House of Representatives to pay attention to the case of Venezuelan opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez, who has been unjustly imprisoned by the puppet regime of Nicolas Maduro.

Leopoldo is a grassroots leader and founder of the political party Voluntad Popular. He has been wrongfully accused of criminal incitement, conspiracy, arson, and intent to damage property.

Leopoldo is being held in a military prison, and his proceedings have been kept secret from the public. We cannot stand idly by while democracy and due process are trampled on in our own hemisphere, Mr. Speaker. Being silent is not an option.

Venezuelan students have been peacefully demonstrating against this regime that has no qualms repressing the protest with live ammunition and shock groups whose tactics are extremely violent.

Those of us who advocate for freedom have a moral responsibility to support the students in Caracas, Merida, San Cristobal, Valencia, and throughout Venezuela who, through peaceful means, seek the way to create a more perfect union with democracy and freedom as their guide.

THE OLYMPIC STRUGGLE IN UKRAINE

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this weekend the world watched the close of the Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. Our Nation distinguished itself.

Right next door, in the nation of Ukraine, another Olympic struggle was going on as tens of thousands of young people, the future of that country of Ukraine, rose in peaceful assembly and achieved their goal of removing corrupt leadership and of offering the hope that life in Ukraine could be better for all.

May I encourage the leaders of Ukraine's Parliament, the Verkovna Rada, to rise to this occasion, to embrace all of that great country, to keep the peace, to move toward democratic reform, so that the full potential of that remarkable place on this Earth can be reached for the first time in modern history.

May Ukraine extend west and south and east and north. Her power is yet to be fully realized, and we congratulate those who are moving toward peaceful progress in that nation.

May God go with you.

RECOGNIZING RARE DISEASE DAY

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

Mr. PAULSEN. Mr. Speaker, this week, on February 28, we recognize Rare Disease Day, which gives us a chance to raise awareness of the rare diseases affecting our communities.

In the United States, there are 7,000 rare diseases affecting nearly 30 million Americans. One disease I would like to raise awareness about today is pulmonary fibrosis, which affects individuals' lungs and their ability to breathe.

Pulmonary fibrosis kills 40,000 Americans each and every year, the same number of annual deaths as from breast cancer. There is still no known cure, no known cause, and no FDA-approved treatment.

Earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, Senator COONS and I led a bipartisan letter, with 41 other Members of Congress, asking the National Institutes of Health to review their funding levels for rare diseases like pulmonary fibrosis. This letter shows that Members on both sides of the aisle want to see more progress in fighting back against these rare diseases.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues and constituents to remember our fellow Americans suffering from rare diseases, including pulmonary fibrosis.

HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF WILLIAM T. MAGEE

(Mr. WENSTRUP asked and was given permission to address the House

for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Speaker, on February 28, another member of America's Greatest Generation will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. William T. Magee—''Tom,'' as he is known—was an American and Cincinnatian we can all be proud of.

Tom was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, two Bronze Stars, and two Presidential Unit Citations during his service in World War II.

Serving aboard a B–24 Liberator, Tom's plane was shot down over enemy territory, and he survived 10 days in enemy territory before returning to the fight.

Later, with a different crew, Tom safely landed a bomber after the pilot and copilot were killed by enemy fire.

Tom came home to Cincinnati, where he lived the rest of his life, devoted to his family, work, and community. Tom's legacy of serving his Nation inspired three children and two grandchildren to serve our nation in conflicts ranging from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thank you, Lieutenant Magee. A grateful nation salutes you. Rest in peace. Rest in peace.

THE FAIR ACT

(Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about fairness, to talk about individuals, many from my district, who are being treated unfairly because of the President's health care law.

Marjorie, from Carmel, recently wrote to tell me that coverage on the exchanges for her family will cost at least $1,500 a month. Her husband recently lost his job in the health care industry, and she has two kids in college. Her only option may be to go without health care and pay the penalty to the IRS. For Marjorie, ObamaCare is not fair.

Mr. Speaker, too many Hoosiers, too many Americans have similar stories. The President has delayed the employer mandate for businesses twice, but he has offered no such relief for individuals who are struggling.

That is why Republican Study Committee Chairman STEVE SCALISE and I have introduced the FAIR Act. This simple bill ensures that whenever the ObamaCare employer mandate is delayed, the individual mandate will be delayed as well.

House Republicans understand that fairness means not treating people differently. It means government cannot pick and choose which laws apply to which Americans.

Mr. Speaker, let's pass this commonsense piece of legislation. It is the fair thing to do.

NATIONAL CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise as cochairman of the bipartisan Career and Technical Education Caucus to recognize National Career and Technical Education Month, celebrated each February.

National CTE Month recognizes the contributions that career and technical education programs make to the American economy, along with the important work being done by CTE professionals and teachers.

In today's competitive job market, high-paying, high-demand jobs require technical skills and training. CTE programs have been historically underutilized, yet, in an era of record high unemployment, these programs are the key to bridging the skills gap.

CTE Month is also a time for policymakers to ask, are we doing enough to ensure individuals have the skills that will lead to a family-sustaining job?

Now, I know my fellow colleagues in the Career and Technical Education Caucus share these concerns. I was pleased to learn that Senators ROB PORTMAN of Ohio and TIM KAINE of Virginia have followed suit and organized the Senate CTE Caucus, and I look forward to working with them and my House cochairman, Mr. LANGEVIN of Rhode Island, as we continue to promote America's competitiveness through CTE programs.

MAKING IT IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEWART). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from California (Mr. GARAMENDI) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be back on the floor once again. I won't take a whole hour here, but I wanted just to talk about something that is so very important to America and, really, to the future of this country.

I like to start these discussions with what are we all about? What should we really be thinking about?

I find myself often going back to Franklin Delano Roosevelt during a very difficult time in America's history, the Great Depression. He put forth a principle, if you would, a values statement of what he was about and really what this country could and should be about.

He said the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

It is a values statement. It is a statement of what I like to believe I am here for, to deal with this profound, important issue in this, another period of stress for the American family.

We often find ourselves here on the floor, and I do this almost all the time, talking about this subject, the subject of Making It in America. This is a manufacturing strategy for America, and in this strategy there are many elements that we spend time on the floor talking about and legislation that we push here dealing with how to revive the manufacturing sector, and in doing so, give the American family, the American middle class, an opportunity that it once had: to find a good-paying job, to be able to make it in America with their family, to provide for a home, for food, for clothing, for education, vacations, sort of the American Dream, to be able to do those things. They knew that if they would work hard they would be able to make it.

Well, one way of achieving that is with this strategy of rebuilding the American manufacturing sector to make it in America, whether that is manufacturing food, as occurs in my district—it is a big agricultural district—or some of the new technologies of biotechnologies of one sort or another.

The high-tech industry, the automotive industry is coming back, and indeed, for a variety of reasons, some of it had to do with on our legislative agenda. We are seeing the revival of the American manufacturing sector. Good, wonderful. That is where the middle class jobs will largely come from.

There are various pieces of this. There is the trade policy, and there is much debate here on the floor now and in the months ahead about the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a new trade deal. Is it going to be fair trade or free trade?

We don't need free trade. What we need is fair trade.

The tax policies—certainly we see this in the kind of tax breaks that are out there. Does the oil industry need additional tax breaks?

Their incomes, which are the largest profits in the world, do they need to be supplemented with American taxpayer money?

Right now they are, the Big Five: $6 billion a year of American taxpayer money going to them.

We talk about tax policy, talk energy policy, but I want to really focus this evening on these two issues, labor and education.

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We will leave aside the research issues—which are fundamental to future economic growth because you have to be out ahead, and that is where research comes in—and the infrastructure, which I will weave into this.

But I really want to focus on labor and education. And I want to focus on a very important part of this equation, this very important part about the middle class and those who want to be in the middle class.

Specifically, I want to talk about women, and I want to talk about a women's economic agenda, about why this is critically important not just to women and their children and the families, but also to America and to America's future.

We know that the American family has changed. We know that, over the years, more and more families are raised by a single parent, and in most cases, that is a single mother. And so a women's economic agenda is critical for those children.

It is also critical for the American economy because, when women succeed, America succeeds. This is a theme we are going to spend a lot of time talking about. We are going to talk about women in the American economy and their success.

And here are three of the principles that we need to talk about. America's success is dependent upon the success of women because women are a major part of our workforce today, and they are a major part of the poverty issue in America.

One in three women in America are living in poverty or are teetering on the brink of poverty. That is 42 million women, plus the 28 million children who depend upon them.

And the American family has changed. Today, only one in five families has a homemaker, a mom that is a stay-at-home mom, and a working dad. Two out of three families depend on the wages of the working mom. Two out of three families depend upon the wages of the working mom who is struggling to balance caregiving as well as breadwinning.

The average woman continues to be paid just 77 cents for every dollar that a man working in the same job, the same skill sets, and the same amount of time at that job earns, so the living wage and equal pay for equal work is critical.

The average African American woman earns 64 cents compared to a man doing that same work, and an average Latina earns 55 cents. This is a huge problem for those individuals. It is also a huge problem for the American economy because a large portion of the American workforce is held back by simple discrimination, obviously discrimination based on race.

An African American woman, a Latina woman, 55 percent of the wage that a man would earn in that same job, or 64 percent for an African American woman. It is discrimination, for which there ought to be no place in America.

Closing the wage gap between men and women would cut the poverty rate in half. Closing the wage gap for an African American woman, for a Latina woman, for a European woman would reduce the poverty rate in America by 50 percent.

Is this on the agenda for America? Is poverty on the agenda? You would think so, listening to the debate on the floor of the House of Representatives. How do you close the gap? End wage discrimination. That is how you do it.

This is not a new issue. This is an issue that has been with us at least for the last 60 years. President Kennedy talked about this in the early part of his all-too-short Presidency.

Women make up nearly two-thirds of the minimum wage workers in America, and a vast majority of these workers receive no paid sick days, not one, not one paid sick day; yet these are the mothers, these are the mothers that have the children, and these are the children that get sick.

So what is that mother to do? She might very well lose her job. Even though she is earning less than a man, she might very well lose her job when she does what every mother wants to do, and that is to care for their sick child.

More than half of the babies born to women under the age of 30 are born to unmarried mothers; and most of those mothers are White, a single-parent family and a woman, a White woman earning 77 cents doing a job that a man is paid a full dollar.

There is something wrong with this, and this is something that the House of Representatives and the Senate must deal with, and I am sure the President would sign that bill.

Nearly two-thirds of Americans and 85 percent of the millennials believe that the government should adapt to the reality of single-parent families and use its resources to help children and mothers succeed, regardless of their familial status.

An overwhelming 96 percent of single mothers say paid leave in the workplace policy would be the most help to them, and 80 percent of all Americans say that the government should expand access to high-quality, affordable child care.

A living wage, equal pay for equal work, paid family and medical leave, and affordable child care, this is an agenda. This is the Democratic agenda; this ought to be the Republican agenda; and it surely ought to be the American agenda, because when women succeed, America succeeds.

Three things that have been on the agenda for America for a long time and that are obviously not yet done. A living wage, this is the minimum wage issue. This is swirling around the congressional debate. Should there be a living wage, a minimum wage, a minimum wage of $10.10 for every American? What would it mean to women? It would mean that half of the women in poverty would no longer be there.

When you couple it with equal pay for equal work, suddenly, you have an American agenda where we can go after poverty, where the great debate about the equality of opportunity in America is addressed, where the equality and the wage disparity is addressed, where we can make some real progress in dealing not only with poverty, but also dealing with the well-being of our children.

We are in America, where one out of four American children go to bed hungry. You want to deal with that issue? Then you deal with a living wage and the minimum wage issue, $10.10, which is actually just about equal to what the minimum wage was when Ronald Reagan was Governor of California, long before he became President, and then you pay equal for equal work. This is an agenda that ought to be the American agenda.

Here is a little bit more on it. The challenge, the gender pay gap, where an African American woman earns 64 percent, or 64 cents, of what a male would be paid for in that same job, where a Latina earns 55 cents for what a man would earn doing that same job, and where, on average, across this Nation, it is 77 cents, the gender pay gap.

The Paycheck Fairness Act, H.R. 377, raise the minimum wage, H.R. 1010—which, by the way, ought to be $10.10—these bills have been introduced. These bills have strong Democratic support. These bills are not heard in those committees that our Republican colleagues control.

It is time for these bills to be taken up. It is time for America to end the gender pay gap with H.R. 377. It is time for the minimum wage to become, once again, equal to what it was in purchasing power when Ronald Reagan was Governor of the State of California in the 1960s, H.R. 1010, $10.10 an hour for every worker in America, wherever they are, whether they are a woman or a man.

Working family, how is a parent to care for their children? If you care about family values, this is important. This is important if you care about family values. What is a working mother to do? Remember, roughly half of the American families are now headed by a single woman.

If that child gets sick, in many places across America, that mother is faced with a terrible quandary. Are they going to go to work and leave the child at home sick? Or are they not going to go to work, lose a day of pay or, quite possibly, lose the job, which is not uncommon in America?

So we put forth H.R. 1286, the paid sick leave act, something that is common, in fact, in every European country, advanced economies around the world understand family values, like ours should, too. They understand that parents, man and woman, husband and wife, single father or single mother want to take care of their children.

We have six children. We have raised those children. We have 11 grandchildren. And we understand that those kids are little petri dishes that collect germs and get sick. We understand what it takes to care for a child. It takes the attention, the full attention, of the husband or the mother or the single mother or the single father.

H.R. 1286 is languishing in the committees controlled by our Republican colleagues. We talk a lot about family values around here. If you really care

about them, then you would let that parent have a paid sick leave so they can care for their child.

Children, oh, we spend a lot of time talking about children, our future, the destiny of America, children. What can we do now to help every child in America? What can we do now to help every family in America?

Well, I would suggest that we take a look at H.R. 769, the Permanent Child Tax Credit Act. We have a child tax credit. It bounces up and down, depending upon the whims of Congress and the Senate and the President.

This would permanently increase the child tax credit so that every working family, from the top down to the bottom, those people that are on the edge of poverty, those people are not now earning $10.10 an hour, that are at just above the now minimum wage at the Federal level, say $7 an hour, so that those people would be able to at least have a little more income with the permanent child care tax credit.

How long have we known that, if you could give a child early education, pre-K, prekindergarten education, that that child, in the formative years of their brain development, would advance faster and longer in the development of their mind and their capabilities to address the challenges that they will have out ahead?

We have known this for decades. We know that, if you can get your child into pre-K, into early childhood education, that that child can be advancing faster, be better able to handle first grade, second grade, and on, all the way through college.

This is not just an American issue. Around the world, countries that want to advance their economy, countries that want to have social justice, countries that want their families to have economic opportunity, they want early childhood education.

□ 1945

So we put forth H.R. 3461, the universal pre-K education act. Universal pre-K, can we afford it? Of course, we can. When you consider the benefit to this Nation and when you consider the benefit to that individual child, you would say of course we can afford it, and, alternatively, we cannot afford not to do it. We cannot allow a large percentage of our children to not succeed in school, to not be able to keep up, to go into a classroom ill-prepared, whether it is kindergarten or first grade, to begin behind on the first day of school. It is not uncommon—I don't know, the percentage is probably somewhere less than 25 percent of the children in America are able to get pre-K education.

But I will tell you who is able to get it: those families that have the upper income, those families that are not worried about the gender pay gap, and those families that are not worried about the minimum wage. Those families are able to send their kids to early childhood education courses of all kinds. And so when those children enter kindergarten, when those children begin the first grade, they are the ones ahead. They are the ones that are likely to stay ahead. And for those children that don't have this opportunity, they are the ones that are behind. They are the ones that are going to fail. They are the ones that will drop out and likely to become the troublemakers of the future.

So why not give every child in America an equal opportunity to succeed? Can we afford it? You bet. We cannot afford to not do this. This is critical. This is our agenda. When women succeed, America succeeds. This is a family value agenda. This is an agenda where, if you care about the American family, if you care about its success, if you care about its health, then these are the issues that we ought to be pushing: the gender pay gap, equal pay for equal work, the Paycheck Fairness Act, H.R. 377; raise the minimum wage, H.R. 1010.

I would ask our Republican colleagues who care deeply about family values—and I know they do—to consider these two pieces of legislation. And if you don't want a Democratic author, find a Republican author and we will support it. We don't care who carries the bill. We just want paycheck fairness, equal pay for equal work. We just want the minimum wage to provide enough for a family to at least survive and thrive.

If you care about family values, then you will want to talk about paid sick leave so that a mother or father doesn't have to make a choice between their job and their child's health.

H.R. 1286, let's give every family a chance. Let's give this a hearing. Let's give this bill a hearing in committee.

And, finally, all of us will stand here on the floor and we will talk for hours about our children, but are we willing to actually do something? Are we really actually willing to fund early childhood education? And are we willing to make permanent a tax break, a child tax credit? Or are we just willing to yap and talk?

Here is something positive. Here is something real. Take up H.R. 769, the Permanent Child Tax Credit Act. Take up universal pre-K education, H.R. 3461. If you are not willing to take these bills up, if you are not willing to introduce something similar to address these issues, then it is all talk. It is just a lot of hot air, for which there is justifiable belief that that is most of what is done around here.

Give the American family a chance. Give American women the opportunity to succeed. Let's do it. And we can. So this is our agenda. This is part of the Make It In America agenda when we talk about labor, when we talk about education, we talk about women in the workforce, and we talk about their opportunity. We can Make It In America. We can make things. We can make locomotives, we can make solar cells, and we can make windmills. But if we want the American people to make it, if we want them to be able to take care of their families, if we want children to thrive, and if we really want the American family to make it, then we had better be thinking about women, and we had better remember that when women succeed, then this country will succeed.

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

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN VALUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader,

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be recognized and to address you here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives. Of all the things that are on my mind that I would like to express to you, I know that there are also a good number of things on the mind of the gentlelady from Florida, and so I would be so happy to yield as much time as she may consume to the very classy gentlelady from Florida.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I thank the gentleman from Iowa for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge this legislative body to stand in solidarity with the freedom seekers and the pro-democracy advocates of Venezuela. They have taken to the streets, as you can see in these posters, to demand an end to the rule of Nicolas Maduro's antidemocratic measures and his failed economic policies that have caused a shortage of basic necessities like bread, electricity, and more, despite the vast oil wealth that the nation has.

But the harshest shortage is democracy. These unarmed freedom seekers have predictably been met by the heavy hand of Maduro's state thugs. As the Venezuelan forces have responded with violence, Maduro remains intransigent. He vows to continue to unleash the National Guard on these unarmed protesters under the false pretense of protecting the people of Venezuela.

Montesquieu said that there is no crueller tyranny than that which is perpetrated under the shield of law and in the name of justice, and that is what we see with Maduro in Venezuela. There have been over a dozen deaths so far, Mr. Speaker, a high number of arrests, including one of the most vocal critics of Maduro, Leopoldo Lopez, who turned himself in even though he is facing serious, trumped-up charges. His case caused Amnesty International to condemn Maduro, saying the charges against Leopoldo Lopez were politically motivated and an attempt to silence dissent in Venezuela. I agree.

I ask my colleagues to be as vocal and as engaged on the crisis of democracy in Venezuela as they have been on the problems in Ukraine. It is vitally important to highlight the democratic struggles of the people of Venezuela,

where over a dozen pro-democracy advocates have been killed in the past weeks as Maduro unleashed the thugs in an effort to silence the masses.

The people of Venezuela deserve better than Maduro's abuse of power, his corruption and his antidemocratic measures, and they are pleading for help and looking to the world, turning to the United States, to speak out against these injustices and to help—help them as they fight for their fundamental rights.

The United States must stand with them in this struggle. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I have introduced a bill tonight, H. Res. 488, a resolution that says to the people of Venezuela, to Maduro, and to the world that the United States stands on the side of those who seek liberty and who seek democracy in Venezuela, and that we will not remain silent while those abuses persist.

This resolution also deplores the inexcusable use of violence against opposition leaders and the protesters—many of whom are just students—and the use of intimidation to try to silence dissent. H. Res. 488 also urges responsible nations to not sit quietly by on the sidelines but to instead stand with them in solidarity with the people of Venezuela to actively encourage a process of dialogue to end the violence.

Mr. Speaker, this body must not remain silent on Venezuela. I urge my colleagues to stand in support of freedom, in support of peace, in support of nonviolence, in support of democracy, and in support of those seeking a peaceful, democratic process in Venezuela, and to cosponsor my resolution, H. Res. 488.

I thank the Speaker for the time, and I thank the gentleman from Iowa for yielding me his time.

Thank you, sir.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentlelady from Florida. And reclaiming my time, I will move to the microphone.

Again, Mr. Speaker, through you I am thanking the gentlelady from Florida for raising this issue and giving me the number of the bill that I expect to sign on in business tomorrow, H. Res. 488. I am of the opinion that here in the House of Representatives we have too few people that demonstrate the leadership that the gentlelady from Florida is demonstrating tonight and taking a stand on foreign policy issues. I am very happy to see the focus that has been brought on Venezuela from some of the leadership that emerges from Florida.

It has caught my attention, Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the circumstances taking place in Venezuela, I can't help but think about essentially the sister state of Cuba and how they have led the Marxist socialist regime in the Western Hemisphere since about 1959. I think of this Western Hemisphere, all of it, as the domain of, as Churchill described it from this hemisphere, Western Christendom; the foundation of Western civilization, Judeo-Christianity; the values that come from the Old and New Testament; the values that Christopher Columbus brought here across the ocean, and that great footprint of the moral values and the ethics that have emerged as part of our Old Testament values and our New Testament values; the idea of the Protestant work ethic, turning the other cheek and building a civilization, a society to provide the best opportunity for salvation to glorify God and our country and to understand, as our Founding Fathers understood, that our rights do come from God, and to promote that. The full-throated Americanism as the leaders of the free world, of Western Christendom, has not been asserted strongly enough in this hemisphere, and certainly not strongly enough in other hemispheres, Mr. Speaker. But it comes home when you see the violence in a place like Venezuela where at least a dozen dissidents have been killed as political enemies to the Maduro regime, and one a beauty queen who was abducted on a motorcycle, shot in the head, and died last week.

The tragedy that is taking place down there, I can't help but reflect back upon my travels in that part of the world and recognizing a trip through some of the places such as Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Panama, some of the stops I made along the way. I have not been to Venezuela. I have been to Cuba, Mr. Speaker. But one thing that I recognized is that in South America they just don't know America very well. They don't know Americans very well. They look to the United States as the leader in the free world, the economic leader, the military leader, and the cultural leader, but we watched as the beginnings and the growth of the leftist regimes have taken hold in South America for a number of reasons.

□ 2000

Some is because nature and power abhors a vacuum, and we have allowed a vacuum to take place in places like Venezuela.

In Cuba, we have sat back and watched for all these years waiting for the biological solution to take place with the Castro brothers—and that is the vernacular that I picked up on a trip to Cuba some time ago.

If the United States doesn't take leadership in this hemisphere, we are going to see some philosophy, some ideology take that leadership, and we have seen it take place in Venezuela. Hugo Chavez seemed to be enamored with Cuba, and we have seen Fidel Castro led the Marxist regime in Cuba, and influenced Venezuela. It is hard to think of a Venezuela that has been such a Marxist thorn in the side, a belligerent Hugo Chavez, one who called our President ''the devil'' from New York City from the United Nations, from the podium, and went on with, I will say, a smelly description, Mr. Speaker, that was offensive to anyone on the planet, let alone Americans.

Hugo Chavez drove that Marxist agenda in Venezuela, and then he handed this thing over to Maduro, according to Maduro, and now we have a second regime there, a second Marxist regime that is oppressing its people and killing freedom demonstrators and dissidents and people that stand up for freedom, and we have sat here without a strong voice coming from our President of the United States. Not a condemning voice of the violence in Venezuela, not a strong leadership that says to them there is a reason why you are running into shortages. One thing that the gentlelady from Florida didn't miss: a shortage of toilet paper, of all things. Now, how can an oil-rich country that is rich enough to promise that they are going to give free energy and fuel to Americans—that was just a couple years ago by Hugo Chavez—and yet they can't operate an economy that can provide the simplest necessities of life, like some food products, or toilet paper, for example. Those things are produced automatically and spontaneously by a demand economy that comes from free enterprise.

If there is no product on the shelf, and say it is milk or bread—in Cuba it is the ration of sugar and beans and rice—but if there is nothing on the shelf in America, somebody will look around and think, Why is that shelf bare? Why can't I buy something I want, and they will start to produce it. If you bake a loaf of bread and put it on the shelf, and it is of moderate quality for a moderate price, someone else will come along and bake a better loaf of bread for a lower price, or maybe a cheaper price of equal quality, and that competition of one loaf of bread sitting next to the other decides. When the consumer pulls that loaf off the shelf and puts it in their grocery cart, that is a vote for one product over another. It happens over and over again in this country, and because of that, we walk into a grocery store in America—and I remember the stories when the Russians first were able to come over here and see what a supermarket looked like. It was amazing for them to see that you could grab anything you wanted.

Then I think of my trips to places like Russia and Cuba, and it looks to me like their societies and their civilizations are trained to stand in line. When we went to the Duma in Moscow a few years ago on a trip, we stood outside even though we were expected by their parliamentarians. We waited a long time to get in line and then a long time to get into the line where you hang your coat up. Everybody wears a heavy coat over there. Then to get into the line again to go into the hallway, and then get into line to go into the room, then to go into the waiting room, and I looked around at people that were standing in line, and it looked to me like maybe they didn't all know why they were in line, but it

was what they were trained to do, stand in line. I presume when they got to the front of line, some of them found out why they were there. Maybe all of them knew. I didn't know the language of the culture there. When they finished that, they would go get in another line.

It is a full-time job to go line up and wait for those things that come to us as Americans, offered to us, some of them delivered to us, but free people stand in fewer lines than oppressed people do. You will see lines in communist countries far more often than you see lines in free countries like the United States of America.

You don't want to stand in line to buy something. You don't want to stand in line to receive something. You will stand in line for something free from government. That happens in this country, too. You surely don't want to stand in line to pay for something that you already have. So you will find there is somebody working the cash registers to move you through to get their hand on your credit card and ring that up. That is what happens in a free country.

Lines in Russia; lines in Cuba. I recall seeing a couple of lines in Cuba that I didn't expect to see. One of them was a line for ice cream. As we went down the street, I looked over and here is this long line that went for a couple of blocks. I asked our guide, What is going on there? They have a shipment, a delivery of ice cream, and so the Cubans are lining up to get an ice cream cone. Now two blocks to wait for an ice cream cone? We wouldn't do that. We would walk another block to get an ice cream cone at the competing store, or the one next to that, or the one next to that. That is one of the differences that are taking place.

You know, I reviewed some of the speech that was delivered by Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN's Senate counterpart, Senator RUBIO, and as he spoke on the Senate floor about doctors and about how the junior Senator from Iowa, and that is my word ''junior,'' who traveled to Cuba and was very happy and proud of what he had seen there and the accomplishments of the Castros and talked about the medical system that they have in Cuba. I think that flows from Michael Moore's movie rather than anything that has to do with fact, Mr. Speaker, but it was stated by the gentleman from Florida that yes, they have good doctors, doctors that are Cuban, and many of them are the ones that defected to the United States. I agree with that statement.

He also mentioned doctors and cabdrivers. I have experienced that. I have hailed a cab in Havana, a legal trip to Havana, I might say, which might have been different than the ones we are discussing, and what do you meet behind the steering wheel? A doctor driving a taxi cab. What was the most logical tax cab when I was there? A 1954 Chevy with a Russian diesel engine under the hood. It looks like it is a rolling repair shop up and down the streets, which are better than I thought they would be. There are cars that have pulled off that break down, and they just come along and jack them up and crawl underneath and fix them with the parts that they can scavenge. When the car is repaired, they drive it on again. It is part of traveling to stop and repair the vehicle you are in. These vehicles are put together from parts from different places.

One of the things also that I noticed was that there were Russian tractors sitting all over the place. They are broken down, and they had been robbed for parts. There would be a circle maybe of grass growing up around the tires where they had been there for a long time.

Then I began to notice that there were these Brahmin oxen around the island in a lot of places, and they are staked down with a rope. There is a stake driven down and then a rope, so they have what I call a pivot-grazing system for these Brahmin cattle that they are using as beasts of burden, and I imagine raising them for the meat they get as well, scattered all over the island. I was able to plow with a team of Brahmin oxen. I had my NRA cap on, and I have a picture of that that I won't forget.

But what happened in Cuba was, back in the 1990s when the Soviet Union was going with a stronger economy than the Russians are today, Mr. Speaker, they saw the Soviet Union meltdown going into the 1990s, and when that happened, the subsidy for Cuba stopped. They weren't able to continue that subsidy. What had been taking place was Cuba raised sugar. The world market for sugar then was 6 cents a pound. The Russians would send them oil for sugar. The Cubans would ship the sugar to the Russians, and the proceeds from the oil would come into Cuba, and they were getting 51 cents worth of oil for every 6 cents of sugar they sent. That was how they propped up the government in Cuba. It was subsidized by the Soviet Union. That was the most important equation of it all.

When the Soviet Union imploded and shrunk back, states declared their independence and the Russian Federation was formed a little bit over time, the Cubans had to stand on their own. When that happened, the subsidies stopped, so did the parts and the support for the Russian tractors that were being used. They got parked as they broke down, and then they were robbed for parts. It is the only economy that I know of that has gone from an industrialized, mechanical tractor production for agriculture back to using animals again and animal husbandry. That is digression, and I would make that point to my junior Senator from Iowa.

Cuba digressed. It wasn't progress, it was digression. They digressed to using animals as beasts of burden again, where once they had tractors, albeit Russian tractors. They digressed from doctors in the clinic and hospital to doctors behind the steering wheel of a 1954 Chevy with a Russian diesel under the hood. They digressed from a country that had a measure of freedom, however harsh the dictatorship was under Batista, to a nation now that has been oppressed and under a communist dictatorship since 1959.

The Senator from Florida also mentioned that they don't have the freedoms there, that even though there was discussion about access to the Internet—I can tell you personally, the Senator from Florida is right, Cubans don't have access to the Internet. I was on a trip up to a college up in the mountains in Cuba. We rode up there in the back of a Russian deuce-and-a-half, and it took, oh, about an hour and 45 minutes or maybe 2 hours to wind our way up there into this little campus in what I would call hills, but they said mountains. As we were interviewing some of the professors there and some of the students there, I was standing next to a gentleman who was from Florida. His parents had escaped from Cuba and still held deeds for land that they owned, real estate that they owned in Cuba that they had never been compensated for. He was perhaps the best interpreter that I had ever experienced. His name is Ed Sabatini, and I hope that Ed Sabatini is out there somewhere.

As they were talking, he was telling me what they were saying, and he was reading their body language, their voice inflection, and what they said and putting this together for me in real time. He was one of those people who could talk and listen and interpret simultaneously. He was very skilled. He said to me in the middle of this, as I was asking questions of the Castro minders, he said, you realize that they are not asking the questions that you are asking, because I would ask a question to one of Castro's minders and interpreters. He would turn to a couple of instructors at the school. He would ask a question in Spanish and return it back to me in English. Ed said to me, You know the minder, the Castro minder, is not asking the questions of them that you are asking, and he is not giving you the answers that they are returning. He is telling you something different than you would be learning if you could understand what they were saying. No, I didn't know that. So we broke away from that conversation.

I had asked, Do you have Internet here at this school, at this university? It was a specific question. Their answer came back specifically, Yes, we have Internet.

You have full access to Internet?

Yes, we do. We are in the modern world. We have full access to the Internet.

When I learned they were not answering my questions, we moved away and went down to talk to the some students sitting on the curb, and began more of a rapid-fire conversation that I was catching up with a little bit after the

fact. I wanted to know what this Internet looked like, tell me some more facts about the Internet. They didn't seem to know how to answer the question on having Internet access. We drilled in to get the answer, and it was this: yes, they had access to Internet, and if they had a question that they needed a response to that they would get from the Internet, then they would formally make that request. They would write that request out in a letter form, and put the letter in an envelope, and when the Russian deuce-and-a-half went down the mountainside to Santa Clara, a small city near there, they would deliver the request in letter form, and then whoever was the minder of the Internet would decide if they would get them the answer off the Internet. They would apparently access the Internet, print out the answer that they thought that the student or the instructor should have, put that on a different Russian deuce-and-a-half after a few days or a week, and it would wind its way back up the mountain again. It was 70 kilometers away at least, to send a Russian deuce-and-a-half down with a letter in it to ask somebody who had clearance from Castro to go on the Internet and get an answer back, to send a Russian deuce-and-a-half up the mountain to a student.

That is Internet access as I saw it and heard it from the lips of students there on that mountain school that is like an extension school, an ag college. Some will know what the name of that school is.

When I found that out, I said I want to see out what you have. So we went into a classroom. As we walked into the class courtroom, there were 12 or 14 computers in there. So yes, they had computers. They were old 386s. There were two or three students sitting at every screen, and the instructor was teaching a course on how bad capitalism is.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wish I had had an iPhone so I could have taken a picture of that screen and captured it. It was in Spanish, but it was interpreted to me this way, and this is what I can recall. There were five points on why capitalism is so bad. They were instructing these kids, these students, they were college-aged students, and they were all young men, on how bad capitalism is, and one of the lessons of these five points was a capitalist keeps all of the money and all of the profit and takes enough just to feed the worker so the worker can just barely survive while the capitalist gets rich.

□ 2015

That was one of the five points, and it was those kind of Marxist points on down the line. As we walked in, they were in the middle of indoctrinating their students in favor of Marxism and against capitalism.

I don't know who has seen a lesson like that take place in a communist country. I have. It impressed me that how does a young person in a controlled environment with controlled communication ever get the idea that there is a whole great wonderful world out here in America?

But they have a sense of what America is like because then it turned into a question-and-answer period. There were students that were asking questions directly of me. Most of them had to do with agriculture. I was answering them through Ed, the interpreter. Then at a certain point, it became too rapid fire, and he took it over and just did the conversation.

But here is what happened. I remember one big-faced young man sitting in the back of the room, and he asked some of the most prescient questions. But these questions were: Who sets the markets for your agriculture products? And what would be the price of beans and rice and corn, for example, and oats and wheat?

I answered him that the market sets the prices. Well, how does the market set the prices? Well, there is a buyer that makes an offer and a seller that decides whether or not to take it. If the seller says no, then the buyer might decide to raise his price until they get to a place where they agree. That was an amazing concept, and it looked like they had never heard that before.

Then it is, well, no one sets the prices; how can that be, that no one sets the prices? And the second thing will be, well, how often does the price change? That can change hundreds of times a day. It changes every transaction because the buyer and the seller can reach at a different point down to the tenth of a penny, a hard concept for them to understand.

Another question, who sets the price of farmland in the United States? Well, I know about that. The market sets the price of farmland.

Another new concept was, well, no one steps in and assigns a price? No, the buyer and the seller have to agree. That sets the price. You can see that soaking into their minds as they were asking the questions.

And then a question was, Why does anyone ever sell land? I had to explain that sometimes you reach that point in life when you don't want to work the land anymore; maybe you want to retire; maybe you want to take your capital out and roll it into another business; maybe you want to put it into savings; maybe you want to sell it to a neighbor who can utilize it better and the price is high enough; maybe you are overleveraged with a lending institution and you have to sell off a piece of land to get liquid again; maybe the economy went bad and you went broke and you had to sell it all before the bank foreclosed; or maybe the bank foreclosed and then sold it all out from underneath you, as we would say.

All of these were new concepts for these young men in this classroom in Cuba that I had been told by Castro's minders that, yes, they had full access to the Internet, they had computers, and they were connected to the modern and real world.

Well, what I found out was they only had old 386's. They were sharing them two or three at a station. They were learning on the screens of these computers in the old font style that you would see, with that kind of green screen with white lettering on it. They were learning the perils of capitalism and the merits of Marxism.

So that is the kind of minds that are influenced by the Castro regime. We have had an embargo on trading with Cuba for a long time, and we have got a lot of years invested in it. We need to keep it in place. We have to have the kind of leadership in this country that can inspire people to step up and take their island back.

We need the kind of leadership in this country that can inspire the people in Venezuela to step up and take their country back. We need the kind of leadership in this country that will send the message and go down and stop and visit and inspire, in country after country in this hemisphere—even if we are only speaking about this hemisphere—to inspire the people of Central and South America to embrace the kind of life that we enjoy here.

The difference between the United States of America and countries in points south isn't because we are blessed with an extraordinary amount of natural resources that sets us apart. They have a lot of natural resources down in Central and South America, too.

It isn't because our climate is so much preferred to theirs. They have a favorable climate in most of their continent as well, and a lot of people go down there because their climate is favorable to ours.

I have a cousin who spent 8 years in the Peace Corps at Tegucigalpa. He sat in the mountains. He had the only refrigerator for miles around. That is because he is a diabetic, and he needed to keep his insulin in a propane-powered refrigerator.

I talked with him those years ago, and I said, what is the yield potential for corn? Now, we will raise now over 200 bushel an acre in our neighborhood. Down there, a decent crop back then was a little over 100 bushel. He said it has got the potential to raise 100 bushel.

What does it need? It needs fertilizer. It needs seed corn. I said, can't you get fertilizer and seed corn down there?

After I pressed him very hard in those idealistic years when we were still young and haven't experienced a lot of the world—and he more than I have—and his answer was, you have to understand the mindset when you are in subsistence agriculture as opposed to agriculture for profit.

He grew up on a farm. He said the difficult thing you have is to try to not get so hungry that you have to eat your seed corn. That is a different mindset.

We do capital investment here. We wouldn't think of starting a house and

building a house very often, at least, unless we had the capital lined up to go in and build that thing and frame it up and close it in and get it wired and get the utilities all set up, put the roofing and the siding on, and pave the driveway. We might even sod the lawn and have that all penciled into our deal, and then we start.

Down there, it is a different attitude. If they get a little bit of money together, they will go buy a few bricks and put that in the wall of the house. If they get a little more money, they do a little more. They might be building on that house for years and years and years.

Maybe they don't ever get to live in it, but their children do. Maybe their grandchildren move into that because they don't have access to capital like we have because—guess what, Mr. Speaker—because they are not capitalists. They are Marxists. They live with the oppression of Marxism, and it has to be mind control and thought control.

If you fear that your neighbors are going to report you to the regime, if you even fear that your family members that sit around the supper table with you, that one of them might be currying favor with the regime and report what you said at the supper table at night, after a while, it disciplines your thought to not think those things anymore because what you think eventually you might say and what you say might get you in trouble with the regime and might get you imprisoned, incarcerated. And then you can be the subject of the regime and have to suffer through the incarcerations that we know of, of the dissidents that are there in places like Cuba and Venezuela.

I am amazed that one could be impressed with what Cuba has built. I don't know that anybody is particularly impressed with what Venezuela has. They do have oil. They are blessed with natural resources. They have got the wrong forum and the wrong system of government, Mr. Speaker.

What gives people an opportunity, that gives them prosperity, that let's them plan not only for their future and put in capital investment, build a home, get it paid for, put some money in the bank, have an investment for a 401(k) so that you can live comfortably in your retirement, those things come from capitalism, from free enterprise—a free enterprise economy. They don't come from a Marxist state that has a central command that controls it all.

I am very troubled that the inspiration that the United States is isn't being utilized to the extent that it needs to be. So as I look at the void in our foreign policy and I look at a President who has made it his foreign policy to lead from behind, and then I look around the world and I see where is the leadership vacuum—and power abhors a vacuum, so it rushes into that vacuum. Right now, there is a bit of a power vacuum in Venezuela.

But I don't know that we have any kind of a plan or a strategy to even voice that strong support for the freedom-loving people that live in places like Venezuela and Cuba. Let our light shine, send the message to them, get this operation going so that one day we can see the Western Hemisphere not only just be the foundation of Western civilization in the modern world, but it can grow and prosper, and we can live in peace and harmony by free enterprise and free trade and open access to everybody's market on an equal basis, not on a preferential basis.

When we passed the free trade agreement, the CAFTA-DR Free Trade Agreement, which is many of the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, that opened up markets for us. We had already given them access to our markets. It opened up our markets.

We need to go down there now and say thank you and meet people and build the kind of relationships necessary. An American presence—and I mean a United States of America presence in Central and South America—should be grown and should be expanded, and it should be part of our strategy to strengthen our leaderships in this hemisphere.

If we do a far better job than we have done in the past, then we also have the moral authority to strengthen our relationships outside of this hemisphere in the Eastern as well as the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. Speaker, I am very troubled also by that strategy of leading from behind in country after country. I am troubled that President Obama, as he came into office, and he was elected in early November of 2008, and on the 17th of November of 2008, then-Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, who is a stellar public servant and an impressive individual as far as an Ambassador is concerned, and someone who, if you listen to him talk, you know that he has got a deep knowledge base on that part of the world. But Ambassador Ryan Crocker signed the agreement, the status of forces agreement, in Iraq. In it, it just simply cleared out all U.S. influence and all U.S. troop presence in Iraq, with the exception of a few marines inside the Green Zone at the new U.S. Embassy.

I looked at the bases that we had established there, the airstrips that we had established there, the billions of dollars invested in military and logistical infrastructure. Essentially, our pledge was to sack up our bats and go home.

I was troubled when I read that agreement. It was already signed on November 17 when I read it. I contacted the White House and said, You are pulling everything out of Iraq, with the exception of a few marines in the Green Zone near the U.S. Embassy, giving away air bases.

And the answer was, We wanted to clear the field so that the incoming President will have free rein, and we hope and expect that he will renegotiate a U.S. presence on these bases in Iraq.

Now, I don't know the depth of the agreement that took us to that point on November 17, 2008; I just know what that agreement said. Of course, Obama was already elected President. Later on, he was inaugurated January 20, the following year, 2009. He continued with this strategy of the pullout in Iraq.

The negotiations that I think should have and had a real opportunity to be successful failed, so that agreement of November 17, 2008, essentially stood, and all of our military and our munitions, the foundation for security that we had established in the entire country of Iraq, gone, gone down to just an embassy security personnel presence was it. All the blood, all the treasure handed over to the Iraqis who were led by a Shi'a and Maliki.

We were advised by some of our top foreign policy people that we shouldn't worry because Iran won't be exerting its influence in Iraq. There is a natural tension there. We should remember that they fought a war back in the eighties, and so they are not going to team up in a way; they are not going to line up against American interests; they are not going to be a thorn in our side or troublesome.

Look what happened in Iraq instead. Yes, a strong influence on the part of the Iranians, the Iranians pushing military supplies through Iraq, reported in the news just a couple of days ago, and also, the al Qaeda flag flying in places like Fallujah and Ramadi, places I have been to, places that were all shot to pieces, places where their mayors and their local leadership said, We are going to rebuild this city, and we are going to live in peace and prosperity.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, you can't live in peace and prosperity if you are living underneath that black al Qaeda flag. That is a result of leading from behind. That is a result of stepping out of Iraq and handing that country over. That is a result of not focusing on the negotiations necessary to establish a status of forces agreement in Iraq that could have provided the security and the stability and the training necessary for the Iraqis to protect themselves from the outside influence that now has a powerful influence in those places that were paid for, some of them more than once, and that includes Fallujah, in American blood, Mr. Speaker. That is Iraq.

Afghanistan, the President found himself pushed into a situation where he had to order a surge, even though he rejected the surge that was ordered by President Bush in Iraq—and it was, by all objective accounts, a successful surge in Iraq. President Obama, Mr. Speaker, ordered the surge of a minimum number of troops in Afghanistan.

I recall General McChrystal laying out those numbers. I don't have them exactly committed to memory, but something to the extent of 75,000 troops will get the job done. With 50,000

troops, it will take a while. There will be a greater risk, and maybe we can get the job done. We kind of think so. And if you get down to 35,000 troops, you hope that you can get the job done.

The President opted for the lesser option and went in, in a minimalist attitude, and leaked out there and in a slow way reinforced our troops in Afghanistan. As soon as he ordered the surge, at the same time, he announced when the United States would pull out.

I don't know how any military strategist would announce when they were going to pull out. That says directly to the enemy, You have to hold on past this date; you will no longer have anybody to fight when they are gone.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that leading from behind has created a vacuum in Iraq that is being filled by al Qaeda and by the Iranians and the conflicting Iraqis again, and leading from behind in Afghanistan, that is creating a vacuum that is being filled by the Taliban.

When we look at where this is going, I am asking, what is our objective there any longer? What are we trying to preserve? I haven't heard this President tell us his goal or his objective.

But I do know this: in listening to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee in the news press conference just yesterday, how it boiled down, is what I heard from the esteemed chairman, Mr. MCKEON, and that is this: If you are going to order our troops into battle, Mr. President, Commander in Chief, then you owe them, you owe them your support for them, but also for their mission. You can't say you support the troops without also supporting their mission.

That needs to be, in a full-throated way, articulated by our Commander in Chief. If you support the troops, you can't do so, unless you also support their mission. If you are the Commander in Chief, you have to articulate that mission and let them know that the sacrifice is worth it and why the sacrifice is worth it. If you don't think so, you have to give a different order.

□ 2030

Those are those parts of the world.

Now I take us to Egypt, and these are the foreign policy discussions, Mr. Speaker, the ones that we don't have very often in this Congress. We can go a whole year and not have a debate on foreign policy. Throughout the Middle East—Egypt and Libya and Lebanon and Israel—these are countries that I visited with a small delegation of Members right before Christmas, so it is fairly fresh. Egypt was a very interesting stop. The things that I learned there and the view that I have on Egypt don't match up with our State Department's view, which, I think, is mirrored in an effort to reflect the President's view. Mr. Speaker, in September, which is when we went in and met with the interim President, Mansour, and also with General el-Sisi, the commander of the military, it was only just June 30 through the 3rd of July that the Egyptians had come to the streets.

I think I have to back up on the history a little bit more in that, yes, Mubarak was a heavyhanded dictator. He was there for a lot of years as a heavyhanded dictator. Yet he was someone we had done business with. If you look back through the history of our relationship with Egypt, it warmed up considerably when Dwight Eisenhower told the British the Suez Canal is not yours. You need to move out of there, and the Egyptians will control the Suez Canal. In '54, that built a bond between the United States and Egypt. It was the right call on the part of Dwight Eisenhower. The British did pull back from their operations going on in the Suez, and it brought about a greater degree of stability in that part of the world.

Then take us to 1979—'79 is the year, as I recall, that we began doing joint operations with some Egyptian troops and other interests—but with American troops—and some of them were National Guard personnel from my neighborhood. It was joint operations in the Sinai. We have conducted those operations since 1979, up until this year, so we have a strong relationship with Egypt. Since 1979, their military equipment has been, by and large—and I don't know that I can say it has been exclusively the U.S., but it has been vastly, predominantly the U.S. The Russian influence in Egypt has been minimal, so that is how I want to keep it. If we are going to have peace in the Middle East, Mr. Speaker, Egypt is an anchor that is necessary for peace in the Middle East.

When our President went to Cairo and gave his speech in Cairo on June 9 of 2009, he seated the Muslim Brotherhood in the front row. Now, that is something that would have been missed by me at the time because I don't recognize the faces of the Muslim Brotherhood, but Egyptians do. They knew that the Muslim Brotherhood, which was formed in Egypt, was pushing to do a takeover of Mubarak, and they didn't understand why the message that was sent by President Obama was at least implied or implicit support for the voices of those folks sitting in the front row. Shortly after that speech—sometime after that speech—our then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made the statement that Mubarak needs to be gone yesterday. The Egyptian people didn't understand why it appeared to them that the new administration at the time was supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and opposing Mubarak and implying that the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood should come to power, which is what happened.

As they demonstrated in the streets, the unrest brought it about that Mubarak was pushed out, and into power and into elected office was the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood. This was incompetence in the government. Plus, each move that was made was assuring the Egyptians they would never see another election again, that their individual and their human rights that they had were going to be diminished as Morsi strengthened his power grip on the control of Egypt. There were 83 million Egyptians, of which only 5.6 million voted for Morsi as President. He did an incompetent job in Egypt. As the economy went into shambles and they saw their freedom go, they thought, What could be worse? We were better off under Mubarak. It wasn't so great, but we were better off under Mubarak.

On June 30 of last summer, the Egyptian people emerged into the streets. Of the 80 to 83 million Egyptians, 30 to 33 million went to the streets to protest peacefully to remove Morsi and put in a government of the people of Egypt.

What happened from that, after that June 30 to July 1, 2 and 3, is that they pleaded with the military to step in and take over. At that point, General el-Sisi and others stepped in to take over the Government of Egypt, and they provided that stability. Yes, it was bloody in the streets of Cairo and in other places in Egypt, but throughout that, you saw radical Islamists who were going in, raiding Christian weddings and slaughtering the wedding parties and others there at churches. While we were there in September, they burned down 70. Then I learned it was as many as 100 Christian churches in Egypt.

How is it that the Christians were caught in a conflict in a mostly Sunni country and were being attacked in that fashion?

The reason was the Muslim Brotherhood wanted the Christians to enter into it to create more of a civil war and more chaos because they believed that they could take power in the chaos. Instead, the Christians said—and there are less than 9 percent who are Christians and over 90 percent Sunni Muslims in Egypt—we are going to pray for these people who are destroying our churches and killing us. We are going to forgive them, and we are going to pray for peace. That was a component that brought about the demonstrations in the streets last summer that I mentioned from June 30 until at least July 3.

Out of that came the stability from the turmoil, however bloody, with interim President Mansour and with General el-Sisi in command of the military, who told us in September of last year, as did President Mansour, We are writing a constitution, and we are going to offer it to the people when we get it polished up and ask them to go to the polls and ratify the constitution in Egypt. That was September when they made that promise.

When I returned in December, shortly before Christmas, I sat down with the chairman of the constitution committee, and I remarked as they had written the constitution, which had been published a couple of weeks before we got there, You promised us that you were going to produce a constitution

and have it delivered to the people of Egypt in November, and I noticed that it didn't show up until December.

He looked at me, and he said, We were only 72 hours late, 72 hours into December. I think that is pretty good for government, don't you?

I smiled and laughed, and said, If you were in my country and asked me a similar question, I would hope that I would be astute enough to give a similar answer that you gave to me.

Seventy-two hours into December they produced a constitution. They put it on the ballot after we left, which was January 14 and 15. It passed overwhelmingly by a vote of the people of Egypt. It sets up elections in Egypt in a couple of months and then elections for a new President down the line, less than 3 months after that. We are seeing the pieces being put in place.

Even though the news media reports every outburst of unrest that is there, I see stability being anchored in Egypt, but it is not being anchored by the leadership of our administration, and it is not being anchored by the leadership out of our State Department. It is being anchored by the voice of the people of Egypt and by the good judgment of those whom they have empowered and, I think, whom they will continue to empower in the upcoming elections.

We are told we don't have to worry about the Russians doing business in Egypt because they don't give anything away, because they don't give any military equipment away. They have to sell everything. If the Egyptians don't have any money, it would seem that there wouldn't be a calculation done for the loans that were offered out of the Saudis and out of the United Arab Emirates, but now we have the Russians, who have negotiated a military equipment deal with the Egyptians for the first time that I know of since 1979 or, I will say, pre-1979. We didn't need the Russians in Egypt. They filled a vacuum—a vacuum due to a lack of leadership, a vacuum created by the implication that the President and our administration is supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

The Egyptian people ask us: Why do the Americans support the Muslim Brotherhood? We are trying to get them out of here. My answer to them in a press conference in Cairo twice was this: the American people do not support the Muslim Brotherhood. In fact, the American people oppose the Muslim Brotherhood.

I believe this administration is on the wrong side of the issue in Egypt, and I think they will have to turn that giant ship of state around slowly because the administration will have to save face. I can't expect that the President is going to go out into the Rose Garden and step behind the podium with the Great Seal of the United States of America and say, ''I came to confess that I was wrong in Egypt.'' No, there will have to be some smoke and some mirrors. If things go as well as they can over a period of time, we can ratchet our policy around to get behind the voice of the people in Egypt and strengthen our relationships there—the economic relationships, the trade partnership relationship and the military relationships—so at least they have the equipment that we had promised them so they can fight off al Qaeda in the Sinai.

So we say al Qaeda is growing in the Sinai, and we say to the Egyptians, You are going to have to go short of some of the equipment you expected from us because we don't like the idea that there was a duly elected Muslim Brotherhood president that was so bad that 30 to 33 million Egyptians poured into the streets.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if that percentage of the population—say, roughly, 40 percent of the population—of the United States were all in the streets on the same day? Can you imagine what that would be like? If 125 million Americans came to the streets and stayed there from June 20 until July 3, do you think it would bring about a change in the policy and in the government of the United States with that kind of unrest? That is the magnitude. I have only seen this magnitude a few times.

I can think of a time when we had the magnitude of that kind of response in the nation of Georgia, when the Russians went in and invaded South Ossetia and the other client state. They went in and invaded and occupied. It was shortly afterwards—a week or so after that—that they had hands across Georgia, where they said a million of the, roughly, 4 million Georgians were in the streets. I saw thousands of them with their flags wrapped around their shoulders and their babies wrapped up in their flags, standing together in unity. When people come out of their homes to the tune of 25 or 40 percent of their population, you know something is wrong, Mr. Speaker.

That didn't get the attention of this administration enough for them to start to ratchet our policy around and get behind the voice of the people. Still they insist that there was a duly elected Morsi, and despite whatever happened after that, we are going to stick with the guy because the people of the Muslim Brotherhood were sitting in the front row, and our President gave a speech in Cairo. It sent a message, and it was a factor in the change in power in Egypt. It was helpful to bring Morsi to power. When Morsi came to power, the Muslim Brotherhood was in power. They did consolidate their power, and they did begin to shut down the rights of the people of Egypt, and the Egyptians rose up.

□ 2045

It is because of a vacuum, and it was because of leading from behind, and it is from having sympathy for people who carry within them the values that are contrary to that of the United States. That is the Muslim Brotherhood. That is just Egypt.

Now, if I go on and I look at the things that have happened in the more than 2½ years of the Arab Spring, and in each of those things, when the Arab Spring erupted within country after country, across North Africa and across and around the Mediterranean, each change that was brought about went against the interests of the United States.

But somehow, the myopic belief that I think was in the mind of Jimmy Carter when he saw the Ayatollah Khomeini return to Iran from London, if I remember where he was based back in 1979, another watershed year, because there was a religious leader we ought to be supportive of him instead of the Shah of Iran.

Look what that got us, the beginning of the radical Islamic uprising, and we have been fighting that ever since, but not with the knowledge, the full knowledge base of what is going on.

In Libya, you have got a civil war that really hasn't ended, it just is suspended, and you have terrorists and radical Islamists that are controlling Benghazi.

You hear people that go to Libya, and you get the idea that somehow they went to Benghazi and walked around the ashes and the ruins where Ambassador Chris Stevens and our three other heroic Americans died. But they are not going there. They can't go there. We don't have the security personnel to go there. Neither do the government officials from Tripoli.

The country is divided at this point, and the terrorists are in control of most of Benghazi, and they go into Tripoli once in a while, and they have surrounded the Parliament and other government buildings and exerted their control there, Mr. Speaker.

There is still a void and a vacuum. We didn't get it resolved in Libya, in spite of all of the treasure and some of the blood that was spilled, thankfully, not American blood.

In Lebanon, it is an even bigger mess with a less decisive future, and you have Hezbollah controlling a significant component of that country and standing out on the streets in their uniforms under their yellow flags with their weapons, defiant. They are a terrorist organization, and they are occupying parts of Lebanon, parts of the Beirut.

The results in Israel: constantly, the pressure is on Netanyahu and the Israelis. Don't you have a little more land that you can sacrifice in the belief that somehow you can trade land for peace?

There is no model in history that I can find that you can successfully trade land for peace, but still, our administration pushes, negotiate to give up something. A two-state solution. Let's move the Jews out of the West Bank because, after all, doesn't everybody know that they have no business living in a place like Judea, where they have lived since antiquity?

It is their ancestral homeland. What justice is there in pushing people out?

If 20 percent of the population of Israel proper is Arab, and they can live in peace and harmony there—remember, the fence is to keep people out, but the 20 percent of Arabs that are inside are peaceful. They are happy enough to live there. They vote. They serve in the Knesset. They serve in the Supreme Court. They have a voice that many will say is equal to that of Jews that live there. There is some question about it.

But if they can live in relative harmony in Israel proper, why is it that the Jews don't have a right to live in places like Gaza or the West Bank?

Then the problem is Netanyahu; the problem is the Israelis.

I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I think we need to be in full-throated support with every kind of commitment necessary to bring about the kind of solutions that promote God-given liberty and things that we know here as American ideals.

We need to elect the next President, a very astute foreign policy president who believes in free enterprise, who believes in the pillars of American exceptionalism, and believes in exporting them to the rest of the world, because we are far better off with an American policy and a promotion of our beliefs and our ideals in other places in the world, where they want to embrace our way of living, than we are pulling back and allowing that vacuum to be filled by the power-hungry despots of people like a Castro, a Chavez, a Maduro, a Putin.

That is the mission for America. It is one of the missions for America. When the Presidential candidates come to Iowa, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask them, speak on foreign policy, become a student of foreign policy. Go travel, draw your own conclusions.

But, in the end, we are a world player. We have been a world player for a long time. We need to stay a world player.

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

OMISSION FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2014

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The SPEAKER pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESIGNATION FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation from the House of Representatives:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 12, 2014.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House,
Washington, DC.

SPEAKER BOEHNER: Nearly twenty-four years ago, the people of New Jersey's First Congressional District afforded me the opportunity, responsibility and honor of serving as their Representative in the United States House of Representatives. I am profoundly thankful and forever humbled by the trust they have placed in me.

I am writing to inform you that, effective February 18, 2014, I will be resigning as a Member of the United States Congress.

The House has always been a place of high energy and healthy division, and it remains so today. But we have always shared the common belief that it is the spirit of the American people and Constitution we live by that makes our country great.

I am proud to have served with members of both parties, Democratic and Republican, liberal and conservative in what has been one of the greatest honors of my lifetime.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. ANDREWS,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 12, 2014.

Lt. Governor KIM GUADAGNO,
New Jersey Department of State, 225 W. State Street, P.O. Box 300, Trenton, NJ.

DEAR LT. GOVERNOR GUADAGNO: I hereby resign as a Member of the United States Congress, effective February 18, 2014.

Nearly twenty-four years ago, the people of New Jersey's First Congressional District afforded me the opportunity, responsibility and honor of serving as their Representative in the United States House of Representatives. I am profoundly thankful and forever humbled by the trust they have placed in me.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. ANDREWS.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 12, 2014.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
The Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 4(d) of House Resolution 5, One Hundred Thirteenth Congress, and section 1(k)(2) of House Resolution 895, One Hundred Tenth Congress, I transmit to you notification that Bryson Morgan has signed an agreement not to be a candidate for the office of Senator or Representative in, or Delegate or Resident Commissioner to, the Congress for the purpose of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 until at least three years after he is no longer a member of the board or staff of the Office of Congressional Ethics.

A copy of the signed agreement shall be retained by the Office of the Clerk as part of the records of the House.

With best wishes, I am
Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk of the House.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. NUGENT (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of plane troubles.

Mr. PASTOR of Arizona (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of family health issues.

Mr. RUSH (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today and the balance of the week on account of attending to family acute medical care and hospitalization.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 50 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, February 26, 2014, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

EXPENDITURE REPORTS CONCERNING OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL

Reports concerning the foreign currencies and U.S. dollars utilized for Official Foreign Travel during the fourth quarter of 2013 pursuant to Public Law 95–384 are as follows:

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN OCT. 1 AND DEC. 31, 2013

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem [1]		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]
Hon. Steve King	12/14	12/16	Egypt		531.62						531.62
	12/16	12/17	Lebanon		210.00						210.00
	12/17	12/17	Libya								

REPORT OF EXPENDITURES FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, EXPENDED BETWEEN OCT. 1 AND DEC. 31, 2013—Continued

Name of Member or employee	Date		Country	Per diem [1]		Transportation		Other purposes		Total	
	Arrival	Departure		Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]	Foreign currency	U.S. dollar equivalent or U.S. currency [2]
	12/18	12/19	Israel		843.28						843.28
	12/19	12/20	Austria		417.00						417.00
	12/20	12/21	Norway		655.25						655.25
	12/13	12/21	ALL				12,825.27				12,825.27
Total											15,482.42
Hon. Louie Gohmert	12/14	12/16	Egypt		531.62						531.62
	12/16	12/17	Lebanon		210.00						210.00
	12/17	12/17	Libya								
	12/18	12/19	Israel		843.28						843.28
	12/19	12/20	Austria		417.00						417.00
	12/13	12/20	ALL				19,608.17				19,608.17
Total											21,610.07
Samuel Ramer	12/14	12/16	Egypt		184.00						184.00
	12/16	12/17	Lebanon		75.00						75.00
	12/17	12/17	Libya								
	12/18	12/19	Israel		128.00						128.00
	12/19	12/20	Austria		417.00						417.00
	12/20	12/21	Norway		181.00						181.00
			ALL				7,898.80				7,898.80
Total											8,883.80
Committee total					5,644.05		40,332.24				45,976.29

[1] Per diem constitutes lodging and meals.
[2] If foreign currency is used, enter U.S. dollar equivalent; if U.S. currency is used, enter amount expended.
*Per diem reimbursement.

HON. BOB GOODLATTE, Chairman, Jan. 30, 2014.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

4797. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Importation of Live Birds and Poultry, Poultry Meat, and Poultry Products From a Region in the European Union; Technical Amendment [Docket No. APHIS-2009-0094] (RIN: 0579-AD45) received February 10, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

4798. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of General William M. Fraser III, United States Air Force, and his advancement on the retired list in the grade of general; to the Committee on Armed Services.

4799. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter on the approved retirement of General Robert W. Cone, United States Army, and his advancement on the retired list in the grade of general; to the Committee on Armed Services.

4800. A letter from the Acting Under Secretary, Department of Defense, transmitting a letter authorizing Colonel Terry V. Williams, United States Marine Corps, to wear the insignia of the grade of brigadier general; to the Committee on Armed Services.

4801. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the Department's Alternative Fuel Vehicle program report for FY 2013; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

4802. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting a report pursuant to Section 804 of the PLO Commitments Compliance Act of 1989 (title VIII, Foreign Relations Authorization Act, FY 1990 and 1991 (Pub. L. 101-246)), and Sections 603-604 (Middle East Peace Commitments Act of 2002) and 699 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, FY 2003 (Pub. L. 107-228), the functions of which have been delegated to the Department of State; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4803. A letter from the Assistant Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting Transmittal No. DDTC 13-179, pursuant to the reporting requirements of Section 36(c) of the Arms Export Control Act; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

4804. A letter from the Chairman, Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, transmitting the Commission's Performance and Accountability Report for Fiscal Year 2013; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

4805. A letter from the Chief Operating Officer and Acting Executive Director, Election Assistance Commission, transmitting Fiscal Year 2013 Activities Report; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

4806. A letter from the Chairman, Federal Election Commission, transmitting eight legislative recommendations from the Commission; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

4807. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Establishment and Modification of Area Navigation (RNAV) Routes; Atlanta, GA [Docket No.: FAA-2013-0860; Airspace Docket No. 12-ASO-36] (RIN: 2120-AA66) received February 6, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

4808. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments [Docket No.: 30937; Admt. No. 3572] received February 6, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

4809. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — Standard Instrument Approach Procedures, and Takeoff Minimums and Obstacle Departure Procedures; Miscellaneous Amendments [Docket No.: 30936; Amdt. No. 3571] received February 6, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

4810. A letter from the Paralegal Specialist, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's final rule — IFR Altitudes; Miscellaneous Amendments [Docket No.: 30940; Amdt. No. 511] received February 6, 2014, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

4811. A letter from the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting the Department's report entitled, ''27th Annual Report of Accomplishments Under the Airport Improvement Program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010''; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

Mr. ISSA: Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Supplemental report on H.R. 2804. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to publish information about rules on the Internet, and for other purposes (Rept. 113–354 Pt. 2).

Mr. GOODLATTE: Committee on the Judiciary. H.R. 1123. A bill to promote consumer choice and wireless competition by permitting consumers to unlock mobile wireless devices, and for other purposes, with an amendment (Rept. 113–356). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. GOODLATTE: Committee on the Judiciary. H.R. 1944. A bill to protect private property rights (Rept. 113–357). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. ISSA: Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. H.R. 3308. A bill to require a Federal agency to include language in certain educational and advertising materials indicating that such materials are produced and disseminated at taxpayer expense, with an amendment (Rept. 113–358). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. ISSA: Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. H.R. 1232. A bill to amend titles 40, 41, and 44, United States Code, to eliminate duplication and waste in information technology acquisition and management (Rept. 113–359). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. CAMP: Committee on Ways and Means. H.R. 3979. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, with an amendment (Rept. 113–360). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WOODALL: Committee on Rules. House Resolution 487. Resolution providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3865) to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from modifying the standard for determining whether an organization is operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare for purposes of section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2804) to amend title 5, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to publish information about rules on the Internet, and for other purposes; and providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules (Rept. 113–361).

Referred to the House Calendar.

PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XII, public bills and resolutions of the following titles were introduced and severally referred, as follows:

By Mr. BARBER:

H.R. 4075. A bill to provide funding to the National Institute of Mental Health to support suicide prevention and brain research, including funding for the Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. SHUSTER (for himself, Mr. RYAN of Ohio, Mr. PETRI, Mr. WALZ, Mr. RIBBLE, Mr. KIND, Mr. LATTA, Mrs. WALORSKI, Mr. DENT, and Mr. DUFFY):

H.R. 4076. A bill to address shortages and interruptions in the availability of propane and other home heating fuels in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Mr. CONYERS (for himself and Mr. BENISHEK):

H.R. 4077. A bill to ensure and foster continued patient safety and quality of care by clarifying the application of the antitrust laws to negotiations between groups of health care professionals and health plans and health care insurance issuers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas:

H.R. 4078. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require that ITIN applicants submit their application in person at taxpayer assistance centers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. COLLINS OF GEORGIA (for himself and Mrs. BLACKBURN):

H.R. 4079. A bill to amend title 17, United States Code, to ensure fairness in the establishment of certain rates and fees under sections 114 and 115 of such title, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. BURGESS (for himself and Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas):

H.R. 4080. A bill to amend title XII of the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize certain trauma care programs, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

By Mr. COLLINS of New York (for himself, Mr. REED, and Mr. GIBSON):

H.R. 4081. A bill to prohibit funds made available to the Department of Education or the Department of Justice from being used to provide postsecondary courses in prisons; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee:

H.R. 4082. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the work opportunity tax credit and to provide such credit for hiring long-term unemployed individuals; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. GIBSON:

H.R. 4083. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to reduce the rate of tax regarding the taxation of distilled spirits; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. HASTINGS of Florida (for himself, Ms. DELAURO, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. MORAN, Mr. RANGEL, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. SERRANO, and Mr. CONNOLLY):

H.R. 4084. A bill to amend the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 to establish a Community Gardens Pilot Program, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. HIMES (for himself, Ms. DELAURO, and Ms. ESTY):

H.R. 4085. A bill to amend title 4 of the United States Code to limit the extent to which States may tax the compensation earned by nonresident telecommuters and other multi-State workers; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

By Mr. KILDEE (for himself and Ms. DELAURO):

H.R. 4086. A bill to amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to improve 21st Century Community Learning Centers; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. KILDEE:

H.R. 4087. A bill to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to provide grants to States for summer employment programs for youth; to the Committee on Education and the Workforce.

By Mr. KILDEE:

H.R. 4088. A bill to provide funding for Violent Crime Reduction Partnerships in the most violent communities in the United States, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Appropriations, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. ROHRABACHER (for himself, Mr. MCKINLEY, and Mr. JONES):

H.R. 4089. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income compensation received by employees consisting of qualified distributions of employer stock; to the Committee on Ways and Means.

By Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia (for himself, Mr. SCHRADER, Mr. LUCAS, and Mr. PETERSON):

H. Con. Res. 86. Concurrent resolution celebrating the 100th anniversary of the enactment of the Smith-Lever Act, which established the nationwide Cooperative Extension System; to the Committee on Agriculture.

By Mr. BENISHEK:

H. Con. Res. 87. Concurrent resolution recognizing the occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the Star Spangled Banner and its importance to the people of the United States; to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

By Mr. HOYER (for himself, Mr. MORAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. DELANEY, Ms. EDWARDS, Mr. WOLF, Mr. CONNOLLY, and Ms. NORTON):

H. Con. Res. 88. Concurrent resolution authorizing the use of the Capitol Grounds for the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

By Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (for herself, Mr. SALMON, Mr. DIAZ-BALART, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. SIRES, Mr. GARCIA, Mr. DESANTIS, Mr. GRAYSON, Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. DEUTCH, Ms. WILSON of Florida, Mr. MURPHY of Florida, Mr. YOHO, Mr. STOCKMAN, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, and Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois):

H. Res. 488. A resolution supporting the people of Venezuela as they protest peacefully for democratic change and calling to end the violence; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

By Mr. SMITH of New Jersey (for himself, Ms. WATERS, Mr. BURGESS, Mr. FATTAH, and Mr. MEADOWS):

H. Res. 489. A resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding the need to facilitate and promote a robust response to the looming global crisis of Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia; to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned.

By Mr. SCHNEIDER:

H. Res. 490. A resolution providing for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 3546) to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Rules.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY STATEMENT

Pursuant to clause 7 of rule XII of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following statements are submitted regarding the specific powers granted to Congress in the Constitution to enact the accompanying bill or joint resolution.

By Mr. BARBER:

H.R. 4075.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 9, Clause 7

Article I, Section 8, Clause 18

By Mr. SHUSTER:

H.R. 4076.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution, specifically Clause 1 (related to general Welfare of the United States), and Clause 3 (related to regulation of Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with Indian tribes).

By Mr. CONYERS:

H.R. 4077.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 3.

By Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas:

H.R. 4078.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Article I, Section 8, Clause 1

By Mr. COLLINS of Georgia:

H.R. 4079.

Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:

Clause 8 of Section 8 of Article I of the U.S. Constitution.

By Mr. BURGESS:
H.R. 4080.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article One, Section Eight, Clause One
''The Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.''
Article One, Section Eight, Clause Three
''To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes.''
By Mr. COLLINS of New York:
H.R. 4081.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 6, Clauses 1 and 18 of the Constitution of the United States.
By Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee:
H.R. 4082.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8.
By Mr. GIBSON:
H.R. 4083.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Section 8 of Article 1 of the Constitution—The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States.
By Mr. HASTINGS of Florida:
H.R. 4084.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article 1, Section 8: The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;
By Mr. HIMES:
H.R. 4085.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution, the Taxing and Spending Clause: ''The Congress shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States . . .''
By Mr. KILDEE:
H.R. 4086.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8
By Mr. KILDEE:
H.R. 4087.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8
By Mr. KILDEE:
H.R. 4088.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 8
By Mr. ROHRABACHER:
H.R. 4089.
Congress has the power to enact this legislation pursuant to the following:
Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 of the United States Constitution. The authority to enact this legislation is also derived from Amendment XVI of the United States Constitution.

ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Under clause 7 of rule XII, sponsors were added to public bills and resolutions as follows:

H.R. 15: Mr. RICHMOND.
H.R. 20: Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Ms. DEGETTE, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. OWENS, and Mr. HECK of Washington.
H.R. 25: Mr. STEWART.
H.R. 60: Mr. MORAN, Ms. KUSTER, Mrs. KIRKPATRICK, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Mr. VARGAS, Ms. MOORE, and Mr. CARTWRIGHT.
H.R. 137: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 138: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 139: Mr. CLAY and Mr. SIRES.
H.R. 140: Mr. DESJARLAIS.
H.R. 148: Mr. HECK of Washington.
H.R. 335: Mr. SCHNEIDER.
H.R. 400: Mr. CONNOLLY.
H.R. 411: Mr. THOMPSON of California.
H.R. 421: Mr. HANNA.
H.R. 425: Mr. PERRY.
H.R. 437: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 460: Mrs. BEATTY.
H.R. 482: Mr. RUIZ.
H.R. 543: Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas and Mr. BUTTERFIELD.
H.R. 565: Ms. JACKSON LEE.
H.R. 594: Mr. MEEHAN.
H.R. 647: Mr. SEAN PATRICK MALONEY of New York, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, and Mr. VALADAO.
H.R. 669: Mr. CICILLINE.
H.R. 688: Mr. REED.
H.R. 713: Mr. MCKINLEY.
H.R. 715: Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, Ms. CHU, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, Ms. KUSTER, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. HINOJOSA, and Mr. MCDERMOTT.
H.R. 737: Mr. GARCIA.
H.R. 792: Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas, Mr. PETRI, and Mrs. LUMMIS.
H.R. 795: Mr. FORBES.
H.R. 798: Mr. HECK of Washington and Mr. LOWENTHAL.
H.R. 831: Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. DAINES, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Ms. EDWARDS, and Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York.
H.R. 846: Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN and Mr. COTTON.
H.R. 920: Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico and Mr. KIND.
H.R. 946: Mr. STUTZMAN.
H.R. 951: Ms. LEE of California.
H.R. 975: Mr. KING of New York.
H.R. 1010: Mr. RICHMOND, Mr. CONNOLLY, Ms. TITUS, and Mr. SCHNEIDER.
H.R. 1014: Mr. BISHOP of Utah.
H.R. 1074: Mrs. BEATTY, Ms. BROWNLEY of California, Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, Mr. LATTA, Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas, Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, and Mr. NUGENT.
H.R. 1084: Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. FUDGE, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. RANGEL, Mr. VARGAS, and Mr. VISCLOSKY.
H.R. 1091: Mr. SESSIONS.
H.R. 1148: Mr. MCALLISTER.
H.R. 1240: Ms. SINEMA and Mrs. BUSTOS.
H.R. 1249: Mr. WENSTRUP.
H.R. 1250: Ms. MOORE and Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia.
H.R. 1252: Ms. MCCOLLUM.
H.R. 1263: Mr. NEAL.
H.R. 1330: Ms. ESHOO.
H.R. 1354: Mrs. CHRISTENSEN and Mr. BUTTERFIELD.
H.R. 1386: Mr. LANKFORD and Mrs. BACHMANN.
H.R. 1427: Mr. NUNES.
H.R. 1500: Mrs. NAPOLITANO.
H.R. 1508: Mr. TONKO.
H.R. 1528: Ms. NORTON and Mr. VARGAS.
H.R. 1563: Mr. HINOJOSA.
H.R. 1565: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 1573: Ms. ESHOO.
H.R. 1599: Mr. BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, Mr. BARBER, and Mr. TONKO.
H.R. 1652: Mr. GRIMM.
H.R. 1692: Mr. NEAL, Mr. RANGEL, and Mr. MURPHY of Florida.
H.R. 1695: Mr. CÁRDENAS.
H.R. 1701: Mr. FITZPATRICK and Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina.
H.R. 1726: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts and Mr. BARBER.
H.R. 1732: Mr. DEFAZIO.
H.R. 1744: Ms. TITUS.
H.R. 1761: Mr. STIVERS, Mr. DOGGETT, and Mr. WALBERG.
H.R. 1779: Mr. PRICE of Georgia and Mr. ROE of Tennessee.
H.R. 1795: Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. GUTHRIE, and Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 1796: Mr. BISHOP of New York.
H.R. 1801: Ms. MATSUI and Mrs. NEGRETE MCLEOD.
H.R. 1814: Mr. MULVANEY.
H.R. 1830: Mr. POSEY.
H.R. 1845: Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 1852: Mr. MCCAUL, Mr. QUIGLEY, Mr. WILLIAMS, Mr. LATHAM, and Ms. EDWARDS.
H.R. 1857: Mr. OWENS.
H.R. 1940: Mr. LOWENTHAL.
H.R. 1944: Mr. SIMPSON.
H.R. 1953: Mr. MICHAUD.
H.R. 1962: Ms. ESTY.
H.R. 1984: Ms. SCHWARTZ.
H.R. 1998: Mr. BISHOP of New York and Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 2012: Mr. FARR.
H.R. 2068: Mr. ROHRABACHER.
H.R. 2135: Mr. FRANKS of Arizona and Mr. GUTHRIE.
H.R. 2149: Mr. MCDERMOTT, Ms. JACKSON LEE, and Mr. VARGAS.
H.R. 2156: Mr. LUETKEMEYER.
H.R. 2172: Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 2222: Mr. GRAVES of Missouri.
H.R. 2278: Mr. PERRY.
H.R. 2302: Mr. RANGEL.
H.R. 2394: Mrs. BACHMANN.
H.R. 2415: Mr. ROE of Tennessee and Mr. CARTWRIGHT.
H.R. 2417: Mr. DESANTIS.
H.R. 2468: Mrs. BROOKS of Indiana, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. CARSON of Indiana, and Ms. SHEA-PORTER.
H.R. 2482: Ms. SCHWARTZ.
H.R. 2530: Ms. JENKINS, Mr. MARCHANT, Mrs. BLACK, and Mr. REICHERT.
H.R. 2531: Mr. CARTER, Ms. JENKINS, Mr. MARCHANT, Mrs. BLACK, and Mr. REICHERT.
H.R. 2536: Mr. KENNEDY.
H.R. 2540: Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. VARGAS, and Ms. JACKSON LEE.
H.R. 2548: Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. LEWIS, Mr. SHERMAN, Mr. VARGAS, Mr. GUTHRIE, and Mr. DEUTCH.
H.R. 2553: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. MCDERMOTT, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. NOLAN, and Mr. VISCLOSKY.
H.R. 2577: Mr. FRANKS of Arizona.
H.R. 2638: Mr. SIRES.
H.R. 2663: Mr. TIBERI and Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California.
H.R. 2689: Mr. SCHNEIDER.
H.R. 2702: Ms. SPEIER.
H.R. 2707: Mrs. NEGRETE MCLEOD.
H.R. 2780: Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas and Mr. GRIJALVA.
H.R. 2788: Mr. ELLISON, Ms. GABBARD, and Mr. MURPHY of Florida.
H.R. 2827: Mr. ELLISON and Mr. DEFAZIO.
H.R. 2841: Ms. SEWELL of Alabama, Ms. NORTON and Mr. NUNNELEE.
H.R. 2847: Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. ENYART, and Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York.
H.R. 2897: Mr. TONKO and Ms. CHU.
H.R. 2901: Mr. MCGOVERN.
H.R. 2920: Ms. LOFGREN.
H.R. 2939: Mr. RUNYAN.
H.R. 2955: Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 2975: Mr. TONKO.
H.R. 2989: Mr. CAPUANO.
H.R. 2994: Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Ms. PINGREE of Maine, and Mr. COFFMAN.
H.R. 2996: Mr. JOYCE, Mr. COLE, Mr. VELA, Mr. KILDEE, Ms. TSONGAS, and Ms. SEWELL of Alabama.

H.R. 3040: Mr. BRALEY of Iowa.
H.R. 3043: Mr. COOK.
H.R. 3086: Mr. ENGEL, Mr. GRIFFITH of Virginia, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. SALMON, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. BRADY of Texas, and Mr. MARCHANT.
H.R. 3116: Mr. CARSON of Indiana.
H.R. 3121: Mr. COBLE and Mr. SCHOCK.
H.R. 3136: Mr. BUCSHON.
H.R. 3150: Ms. JACKSON LEE.
H.R. 3155: Ms. FOXX.
H.R. 3179: Mr. BUCSHON.
H.R. 3186: Mr. PALLONE.
H.R. 3313: Mr. COOK, Mr. VARGAS, Mrs. NEGRETE MCLEOD, and Mr. COLE.
H.R. 3344: Ms. BROWN of Florida, Mr. CICILLINE, Ms. LEE of California, and Mr. MEADOWS.
H.R. 3361: Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts.
H.R. 3370: Mr. RUIZ, Mr. ROSS, and Mr. VALADAO.
H.R. 3382: Mr. RANGEL.
H.R. 3383: Ms. JACKSON LEE and Mr. DEFAZIO.
H.R. 3384: Mr. JONES, Mr. WALZ, Mr. LANKFORD, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. ENYART, and Mr. CALVERT.
H.R. 3413: Mr. JORDAN.
H.R. 3453: Ms. FUDGE.
H.R. 3461: Mr. DEUTCH, Ms. KUSTER, Ms. MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM of New Mexico, Mr. DOYLE, and Mr. HECK of Washington.
H.R. 3474: Mr. WESTMORELAND.
H.R. 3486: Mr. JORDAN.
H.R. 3489: Mr. VALADAO.
H.R. 3494: Mrs. CAPPS.
H.R. 3505: Mr. RYAN of Ohio and Mr. KENNEDY.
H.R. 3546: Mr. DOYLE.
H.R. 3591: Mr. BUTTERFIELD and Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia.
H.R. 3593: Mr. TIPTON.
H.R. 3607: Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina.
H.R. 3629: Mr. COTTON and Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio.
H.R. 3648: Mr. VARGAS.
H.R. 3656: Mr. CARTWRIGHT.
H.R. 3657: Mr. COLE and Mr. COFFMAN.
H.R. 3658: Mr. CARTER and Mr. COFFMAN.
H.R. 3673: Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee, Mrs. BACHMANN, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, and Ms. CLARKE of New York.
H.R. 3698: Mr. BOUSTANY, Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts, and Mr. KENNEDY.
H.R. 3708: Mr. TIBERI and Mr. GRIFFIN of Arkansas.
H.R. 3711: Mr. WELCH.
H.R. 3723: Mr. ROGERS of Michigan and Mr. OLSON.
H.R. 3732: Mr. BUCSHON and Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina.
H.R. 3747: Mr. ISRAEL and Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 3804: Mr. MCNERNEY.
H.R. 3824: Mr. MCNERNEY.
H.R. 3833: Mr. RANGEL.
H.R. 3855: Mr. LYNCH.
H.R. 3864: Mr. LATTA.
H.R. 3877: Mr. COBLE.
H.R. 3899: Ms. DELBENE and Mr. REICHERT.
H.R. 3905: Ms. NORTON.
H.R. 3912: Mr. KILMER and Mr. CÁRDENAS.
H.R. 3921: Mr. CÁRDENAS, Ms. MOORE, and Mr. HECK of Washington.
H.R. 3930: Mr. NOLAN, Mr. HUDSON, Ms. SCHWARTZ, Mr. GOHMERT, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. DUNCAN of South Carolina, Mr. SCHOCK, and Mr. ROKITA.
H.R. 3954: Ms. KAPTUR.
H.R. 3991: Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. WHITFIELD, Mr. POMPEO, Mr. KING of Iowa, Mr. POCAN, Mr. GOSAR, Mr. STUTZMAN, Mr. FORTENBERRY, and Mr. COTTON.
H.R. 3996: Mr. RUNYAN.
H.R. 4001: Mr. ROGERS of Michigan.
H.R. 4006: Mr. POE of Texas.
H.R. 4012: Mr. WESTMORELAND and Mr. LAMBORN.
H.R. 4016: Ms. JACKSON LEE and Mr. LANGEVIN.
H.R. 4026: Ms. BASS, Mr. ENYART, and Ms. ESHOO.
H.R. 4031: Mr. GOODLATTE, Mr. HUNTER, and Mrs. ELLMERS.
H.R. 4040: Mr. ENYART and Mr. HONDA.
H.R. 4041: Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, Mr. ENYART, Mr. HORSFORD, Mr. CICILLINE, Mr. MCNERNEY, Mr. AL GREEN of Texas, Mr. CLEAVER, Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia, Mr. SIRES, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Ms. SPEIER, Mr. WAXMAN, Ms. DEGETTE, and Mr. SMITH of Washington.
H.R. 4051: Mr. ENYART, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. WALZ, and Mr. PETERSON.
H.R. 4064: Mr. TERRY, Mrs. BLACKBURN, Mr. ROE of Tennessee, and Mr. BOUSTANY.
H.R. 4071: Mr. GIBSON.
H.J. Res. 108: Mr. BYRNE.
H. Con. Res. 28: Ms. LOFGREN.
H. Res. 54: Ms. JACKSON LEE.
H. Res. 109: Ms. BONAMICI and Mr. KEATING.
H. Res. 190: Ms. HANABUSA.
H. Res. 345: Mr. RUSH and Mr. MEEKS.
H. Res. 359: Mr. BROOKS of Alabama.
H. Res. 411: Mr. HUELSKAMP and Mr. GIBBS.
H. Res. 418: Mr. MARINO.
H. Res. 422: Ms. MENG.
H. Res. 432: Mr. FOSTER.
H. Res. 442: Mr. CHABOT, Mr. GIBBS, Mr. CRAWFORD, Mrs. BLACK, Mr. WALDEN, Mr. RIGELL, Mr. STIVERS, and Mr. MCCAUL.
H. Res. 456: Mr. ROGERS of Alabama, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. HOLT, Mr. REICHERT, and Mr. LOWENTHAL.
H. Res. 476: Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania, Mr. OLSON, and Mr. NUNNELEE.
H. Res. 479: Mr. RANGEL, Mr. POCAN, and Mr. HASTINGS of Florida.
H. Res. 480: Mrs. LOWEY, Mr. NADLER, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, and Ms. SLAUGHTER.
H. Res. 483: Mr. MCNERNEY and Mr. MURPHY of Florida.

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PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Father Patrick J. Conroy, who is the Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Loving God, we give You thanks for giving us another day. On this day, help us to discover the power of resting in You and receiving assurance and encouragement in Your amazing grace.

Send Your Spirit down upon the Members of this Senate, who have been entrusted by their fellow Americans with the awesome privilege and responsibility of sustaining the great experiment of democratic self-government.

May they be reminded always of who they are. May they be open to Your inspiration, that they might overcome the temptation to work through the issues of this day on their own strength and cleverness. Grant them wisdom, insight, and vision, that the work they do will be for the betterment of our Nation during a time of struggle for so many millions of Americans. May they earn the trust and respect of those they represent, whether or not they had earned their vote, and make history that expands the great legacy of so many who have served in this Chamber before now—a legacy of noble service, sometimes political risk, but always great leadership.

May all that is done this day be for Your greater honor and glory. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

COMPREHENSIVE VETERANS HEALTH AND BENEFITS AND MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY RESTORATION ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 301.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 301 (S. 1982) a bill to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:05 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

At 11:05 a.m. the Senate will resume executive session to consider the nomination of James Moody to be a U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas.

At 11:15 a.m. there will be five rollcall votes in order to confirm a number of district court nominations.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

I ask unanimous consent that there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees between the votes in this series.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would also note, these are 10-minute votes after the first one, and we are going to cut them off when the time is up. So if people are late, they are at their peril. We have a lot to do today, and we are going to move along. It is not fair to Members to keep them waiting around while someone else is finishing a phone call.

Following the disposition of the nomination of Beth Freeman to be a U.S. district judge for the Northern District of California, the Senate will recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate reconvenes at 2:15 p.m., there be an hour of debate equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees prior to a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to S. 1982, the veterans' benefits bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VETERANS HEALTH CARE AND JOB TRAINING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today the Senate will vote to advance bipartisan legislation that expands and improves the health care and job training available to our Nation's veterans.

I thank the Senator from Vermont, BERNARD SANDERS, for his leadership on this issue and for his dedication to America's service men and women.

The 19th century British statesman George Canning said: ''When our perils are past, shall our gratitude sleep?''

''When our perils are past, shall our gratitude sleep?''

Although it is clear the world is still a very perilous place, the United States is finally winding down more than a decade of war in Afghanistan, and we are out of Iraq.

Mr. President, our gratitude shall not sleep. It is time to demonstrate the

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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depth and breadth of our appreciation to the men and women who have kept this country safe in spite of the risk to their lives and the sacrifices required of their families.

I think of a young man from Hawthorne, NV, who enlisted right out of high school, who was 18 years old. He was in Afghanistan for a matter of days, and one of those explosive devices blew off his legs at the hips. I think of him and his parents. What a struggle. That is what this legislation is all about.

This bill would not only improve veterans' access to health care, it would extend job training programs for servicemembers reentering the civilian workforce. It would bolster benefits for surviving spouses and children. And it would make the Veterans' Administration more transparent and more efficient.

Senator SANDERS' legislation would allow the Veterans' Administration to open 27 new clinics and medical facilities in 18 States and Puerto Rico. These clinics will improve the quality of care and reduce travel time for our retired heroes, particularly for veterans who live in rural areas—as the young man I just talked about is from a very rural part of Nevada in Hawthorne.

This legislation would help the VA work to end the backlog of claims for benefits. Legislation contained in this package will also improve care and benefits for veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving their country.

This measure also expands educational opportunities for recently separated veterans by securing in-State tuition rates for post-9/11 veterans at all public colleges and universities. And this measure renews the VOW to Hire Heroes Act, which has helped spur hiring of out-of-work servicemembers and has given more than 70,000 veterans access to job training.

Unfortunately, though, unemployment is still far too high among veterans transitioning back to the civilian workforce. Last year more than 700,000 men and women who served in the U.S. military were unemployed. This is simply unacceptable. No one who has fought for their country overseas should have to fight for a job here at home.

Instead, we should be helping veterans—especially those who have endured more than a decade of war—to continue to serve their country as productive citizens. That is why this legislation extends for 2 years a program that helps former servicemembers get the skills they need to compete in a civilian workforce.

This legislation has the support of virtually every veterans organization in this country—25 of them—including the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The bill is fully paid for with the savings from winding down the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that so strained our military and our financial resources for more than a decade. The Pentagon projects that war spending will go down as we continue to reduce the number of American troops in Afghanistan.

This legislation will lock in those savings, establishing caps on overseas war spending for the very first time. It is only fair that we use a small portion of those savings to invest in our returning veterans, who have given so much over the past 13 years to ensure our safety.

Even with the perils of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan past for so many of our servicemembers, our gratitude shall not sleep. We owe it to our veterans to make the transition to peace a very productive time.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, late last week the Obama administration proposed yet another round of drastic cuts to a popular Medicare program used by millions—millions—of American seniors. Not surprisingly, they did it quietly, in the hopes that these latest cuts to Medicare Advantage would somehow get lost in what folks around here call the ''Friday news dump.'' But the American people are not easily fooled.

The far left has always hated Medicare Advantage. It is a program that offends them ideologically because it offers more market-based choices to seniors than traditional Medicare. But the left's prodding is not the only reason the Obama administration has already cut this successful program so deeply, and why now it plans to cut it even deeper.

The hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of cuts that Washington Democrats want to impose on Medicare Advantage—cuts that will cause millions of seniors to lose access to doctors and face higher premiums—are basically all to fund ObamaCare.

Some folks might describe this as ''robbing Peter to pay Paul.'' But I have a better analogy: It is like ripping parts off a Cadillac to patch up a Pinto. America's seniors actually understand this.

Our constituents like—they like—the choices Medicare Advantage offers. And they do not like ObamaCare. That is why seniors from all across Kentucky have written to protest this misguided policy.

Jack and Alda Rice from Fairdale wrote that Medicare Advantage has been there for them when they needed it, and that it is ''tough for seniors to have to find new doctors, especially for those who live in rural areas. It means traveling greater distances and spending more on gas.''

''It is a sad thing,'' they wrote, ''when good doctors leave a plan because of funding cuts.''

Ronald and Linda Baynum from Edgewood wrote that they ''[found] it appalling'' that money that was put away for senior citizens is now being used for things like ObamaCare. ''It seems like most politicians are only working for themselves instead of the people,'' they wrote.

Well, look, they have every right to be frustrated. I mean, why on Earth would we want to ruin one program that is helping people in order to fund another that is causing them so much pain? The question answers itself.

That is why I, along with Senators CORNYN, THUNE, BARRASSO, MORAN, and BLUNT sent a letter to the administration today—to express our deep concerns with these proposed cuts to Medicare Advantage and other proposals that would increase premiums, reduce choices, and cause America's seniors to lose access to the health plans they were promised they could keep. Our letter asks the administration to act within the bounds of the law to limit the negative impact these misguided policies would have on seniors.

It is notable that even some of our friends on the other side of the aisle seem to understand the pain all of this is causing. That is why 19—19—Senate Democrats recently signed a bipartisan letter with 21 Republicans that called on the administration to mitigate the impact of these cuts to Medicare Advantage. We appreciate Democratic support on any issue. It is good when they acknowledge the senselessness of cutting one successful program to fund a failed one, of cuts that will make it even harder for America's seniors to keep the benefits, plans, and doctors of their choice. But, frankly, it is hard to believe they are really being serious on this one. That is because nearly every one of these Senators voted for ObamaCare, the very law that imposed the same cuts they are now railing against. Nearly every single one of them voted later to keep these cuts in place.

Senator HATCH proposed an amendment that would have reversed ObamaCare's cuts to Medicare Advantage. It only failed because nearly every Democratic Senator voted against it. So Washington Democrats had their chance for a mulligan. They took a pass. They actually cannot have it both ways. Signing on to some letter will not absolve them of responsibility now. It will not erase the fact that even when they were given a second chance to help American's seniors, many voted a second time to take a whack at Medicare.

Let's not forget that these folks and their allies are basically the same ones—the very same ones—who promised up and down that Americans could keep their health care plans that they had and they liked, under ObamaCare—a promise that was voted the ''Lie of the Year'' in 2013. So Americans are not about to be taken in on the latest ObamaCare spin.

Let's be honest. The only realistic solution is to undo the damage altogether by starting over with real reform. That means replacing

ObamaCare and its more than $700 billion in Medicare cuts—cuts imposed solely to fund ObamaCare—and replacing that with bipartisan reforms that can actually help struggling middle-class Americans.

I urge the Democrats to follow the lead of one prominent Senate Democrat who said just the other day he would vote tomorrow—vote tomorrow—to repeal ObamaCare. If he is serious about what he said, that means he is finally listening to the American people instead of the party bosses in Washington. If more of his colleagues on the other side of the aisle would only do the same, we could finally move forward with real patient-centered health reform; we could finally do away with the practice of raiding Medicare to fund ObamaCare; we could finally be done with the hurt this law is imposing on men and women all across our country—college graduates, moms, dads, small business women, constituents who struggle every day just to get by, and, of course, millions, literally millions of seniors. Republicans are on their side. We agree with them that ObamaCare is a law that just does not work, and we agree with them that now is not the time to impose higher costs and reduce choices for senior citizens, as the partisan ObamaCare law proposes.

I know the authors of this law may have had good intentions, but now is the time for them to admit past mistakes and to work with Republicans in a bipartisan fashion to remedy these errors before even more people get hurt by ObamaCare.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:05 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

MOODY NOMINATION

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I wish to speak about a friend of mine and a Presidential nominee to be on the Federal bench in Arkansas. I will take 3 to 5 minutes. I know there are others who want to speak.

Today I rise to support the nomination of Judge James Moody—whom in Arkansas we call Jay Moody—to be a Federal judge in the Eastern District of Arkansas. Jay has been a phenomenal judge and lawyer for a long time in Arkansas.

One of the things this nomination illustrates to me and I think also brings home to people around the country is that this body should not play games with the third branch of government. We have our own issues. This body can be dysfunctional and highly partisan. Let's not export that to the judiciary. We have a fine man who has offered his services to be a Federal judge.

If you look at what I like to look at, Is he well qualified? Yes, absolutely. Everyone agrees on that. Can he be fair and impartial? That is what you want in a judge. The answer is yes, he can be very fair and impartial. He has demonstrated that as a member of the Arkansas bench for a long time now.

Also, especially in a district court position, does he have the right judicial temperament? I think every person who has ever dealt with Judge Jay Moody will say that he not only has the right temperament, but he meets and exceeds all of these criteria across the board. He is exactly the kind of judge we should all want.

In fact, there is no reason why Judge Moody was not confirmed back in December. He should have been. But for the wrangling here in the Senate, but for the problems we have had in the Senate in the last several months, he would be a Federal judge today, and he should be a Federal judge today. In fact, 2 weeks ago I came to the floor and asked for consent that we go ahead and just confirm him by unanimous consent, but that was not granted.

Since 2003 Jay Moody has served as a circuit judge—that is a trial court judge in Arkansas—for the Sixth Judicial District, which is the Little Rock area. He previously worked at the Wright, Lindsey & Jennings law firm, which is one of the most prestigious firms in the State. It is a very well-known law firm. It is highly professional, has a great reputation. He became a partner there in 1994, just a few years after he joined the firm. He also spent time as an adjunct professor at the University of Arkansas Bowen School of Law, where he earned his J.D. He is also a member of a number of different lawyer groups and associations—at least he was before he entered the bench.

I could spend 20 minutes talking about his qualifications, talking about what a fine nominee and fine selection Jay Moody is to be a district court judge in the Eastern District of Arkansas, but, honestly, this turns out to be a no-brainer, so I am not going to belabor his qualifications and why we should do this other than to say that I know I am tired—and I think people all over the country are also tired—of the gridlock here in Washington. They look at a State such as Arkansas where we have eight Federal district court judges and we have two vacancies. These vacancies should have been filled back in December. There is no reason why they should not. But they have been working under 75 percent horsepower now for months. We could have fixed that back in December, but because of the wrangling here in the Senate and in Washington, that was not done.

Today is the day we can rectify that. Today is the day we can confirm Judge Moody to be on the Federal bench.

I think we can all be very proud of this nomination. Again, he is exactly what we would all want in a Federal judge. That is confirmed by talking to lawyers in Arkansas. It does not matter if you are a criminal or civil lawyer; it does not matter if you are a plaintiff's lawyer or a defense lawyer; everybody agrees he will be a great Federal judge.

One of his old law partners, the managing partner of Wright, Lindsey & Jennings, Ed Lowther, told me one time—I said: How is Jay Moody on the bench? Of course, we all knew him as a lawyer. How is he on the bench? He paid one of the best compliments a lawyer can pay to a judge. He said, ''He gets his work done.'' Can we really ask for any more than that? He gets his work done. He takes care of it.

In fact, it is almost uncanny when you look at the very difficult, high-profile, complicated cases that come to the trial court level in Pulaski County Circuit Court. Again, that is our trial court there in Little Rock. Almost always, he is the one who ends up with the case. Not only do the lawyers love him and appreciate him, but also his colleagues obviously have a lot of respect, and they often hand off the more difficult cases to Judge Moody.

In fact, I heard a conversation here on the floor just 2 or 3 weeks ago. My colleague, Senator BOOZMAN of Arkansas, is supportive of this nominee and has been helping push this nominee through the process. He went to the Judiciary Committee—by the way, this nomination has come through the Judiciary Committee not once but twice. Senator BOOZMAN helped push him through the Judiciary Committee, helped get him to the floor, and has talked to his Republican colleagues. I overheard a conversation the other day where Senator BOOZMAN was talking to Leader MCCONNELL. JOHN BOOZMAN turned to Senator MCCONNELL and said, ''Mitch, this guy is great.'' He said, ''You could not have picked someone better had you picked him yourself.'' That is really Jay Moody in a nutshell.

With that, I would like to ask my colleagues to vote for this nomination today. I believe we will vote in about 30 to 45 minutes. I am not sure exactly what time we start. But I ask my colleagues to support this nomination.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY.). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JOHANNS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. JOHANNS. Mr. President, last Friday we heard that the health care law is scheduled to deliver yet another blow to Americans. The administration released a proposal that would significantly cut Medicare Advantage.

Medicare Advantage is a very well-received program. It offers private plan options for seniors on Medicare. Nearly 30 percent of Medicare beneficiaries voluntarily choose to enroll in Medicare Advantage because it offers extra benefits, it offers lower costs, more flexibility, and better care coordination than the traditional Medicare program.

This program, Medicare Advantage, has been very well received in the State of Nebraska. About 35,000 Nebraskans are enrolled in Medicare Advantage.

An analysis notes that further cuts to Medicare Advantage would ''disproportionately affect beneficiaries with low incomes, including the 41 percent of enrollees with incomes below $20,000.''

This announcement is absolutely no surprise; the health care law has siphoned over $700 billion from Medicare—not to strengthen the program but to pay for ObamaCare; $308 billion of those cuts come from Medicare Advantage, again disproportionately affecting beneficiaries with low incomes, including 41 percent who are trying to live on incomes below $20,000.

The reality is these cuts will likely mean fewer benefits and higher out-of-pocket costs for seniors who can't afford that. Plans could drop out of the market all together or seniors could find out that their trusted doctor will no longer be covered by their plan. We have already started to see the consequences.

Since the passage of ObamaCare, the number of Medicare Advantage plans available to seniors has not been strengthened. In fact, they have been reduced from 48 in 2009 to now 20.

In rural areas, seniors have fewer choices. The plans available have dropped from 36 to 13, according to a Kaiser analysis.

Another study estimates about 526,000 of current 2013 Medicare Advantage enrollees will have to make some changes because their plan is not available in 2014.

How do these consequences match up with the President's promises? Well, they don't. The President spoke about Medicare, and he said: ''Don't worry; I am not going to touch it''—or his promise: If you like your plan, you can keep it, which an independent fact checker has called the lie of the year.

The Medicare Advantage issues unraveling today are symbolic of the broader problems with the law. The math doesn't add up, and the promises aren't kept. Nearly every week it seems the authors and supporters of this law are trying to bury their past. They are trying to create hollow promises. They are trying to get around misleading statements and hide behind a new position, at least until the November elections are over.

It is remarkable that they are perfectly willing to evade the key pillars of this law. The law's employer mandate has been ignored and delayed. Mandated plan benefits aren't required for another year, and deadlines are conveniently rescheduled—to when? Until after the election.

This time around 19 Democratic Senators have joined a number of Republicans in writing the Medicare administrator saying the administration's Medicare Advantage cuts ''create disruption and confusion'' and ''inhibit plans from driving the innovation that has resulted in better care and improved outcomes for Medicare beneficiaries.''

What is so contradictory is that these same individuals voted against amendments offered by Senator HATCH, twice, during the health care law debate that would have struck ObamaCare's Medicare Advantage cuts. They twice voted against that.

Understanding the consequences of these Medicare Advantage cuts before the law was passed would seem like the responsible course of action. But rejecting these amendments, voting for a bill that cuts over $300 billion for Medicare Advantage, then backpedaling when the politics get tough, and when the cuts become real to everyday folks, apparently, they were for the cuts before they were against the cuts.

It is even more frustrating when you consider that recent efforts to dodge these cuts are only part of the story. For the past few years, the Obama administration has been pumping money back into Medicare Advantage under the guise of a so-called demonstration program that the Government Accountability Office says they probably don't even have the authority to run. GAO asserted that HHS should terminate the demonstration program, but the administration flat-out ignored that.

The real purpose of the $8 billion program was to effectively mask the health care law's significant cuts to Medicare Advantage until when? After the November election. It is just another example of the administration's hiding their poor decisions and then rewriting the law as they see fit. But as this new Medicare notice clearly shows, this phony demonstration project is about to run out and our senior citizens are truly caught.

Our taxpayers deserve a government that is held accountable for its actions. Americans are tired of temporary fixes and lip service. They are rightfully demanding the truth. It is time for my friends across the aisle to own up to the devastating consequences of this law and acknowledge it is time to repeal it.

During the debate, Republicans also supported an amendment to ensure Medicare savings were invested back into Medicare, not used to back ObamaCare. Remarkably, nearly everyone on the Democratic side of the aisle rejected that idea. Republicans are still committed to that principle, and we stand ready to work on ensuring the Medicare Program is accessible, that it is flexible, and that it is cost-efficient for seniors today and for our grandchildren in the decades to come.

Taking money out of Medicare to finance ObamaCare was wrong and it needs to stop. That is a promise worth delivering on.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss the pain ObamaCare continues to inflict on Americans. It seems like every week brings more ObamaCare bad news for somebody—families, businesses, middle-income Americans, lower income Americans. This past week the bad news was for seniors.

On Friday the Obama administration announced its planned 2015 cuts to Medicare Advantage—cuts that were dictated by ObamaCare and will result in higher prices and fewer choices for millions of American seniors. More than 15 million seniors—close to 30 percent of all Medicare recipients—are enrolled in Medicare Advantage plans. The Wall Street Journal reports that approximately one out of every two new Medicare enrollees chooses Medicare Advantage.

Medicare Advantage offers seniors a chance to pick a plan that is right for them instead of a one-size-fits-all approach. Advantage plans also frequently offer important health supplements, such as dental, vision, hearing, and wellness benefits, as well as smaller copays or deductibles. Studies also show that Medicare Advantage Program enrollees receive better care and experience better health outcomes than seniors enrolled in traditional fee-for-service Medicare.

Despite the benefits these plans offer to seniors, Democrats and the President supported Medicare Advantage cuts in the President's health care law. In 2010, the President and Democrats paid—or I should say tried to pay—for ObamaCare by, among other things, cutting more than $700 billion from Medicare—already, I might add, on its way to bankruptcy—to pay for yet a new entitlement for nonseniors. More than $300 billion of those cuts were targeted specifically at the Medicare Advantage Program.

Those cuts are kicking in this year, hitting Medicare Advantage beneficiaries with cost increases and benefit cuts of up to $70 per month—no small amount for a senior on a fixed income. Friday's announcement of further steep cuts for 2015 could mean up to an additional $75 per month in increased cost next year.

But that is not all. Cost hikes are bad enough, but this year's cuts and the 2015 cuts announced Friday will result in a host of other problems for seniors who participate in Medicare Advantage. First and foremost, some seniors will lose their plans entirely as a result of ObamaCare's cuts, breaking the President's promise that if you like your plan you can keep it.

The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that more than one-half million seniors will lose their current plans in 2014. If the 2015 cuts go into effect, even more seniors will lose their plans next year. Seniors will also have fewer plan choices as a result of ObamaCare's raiding Medicare Advantage to pay for a new health care entitlement program. If next year's cuts go into effect, we can expect to see even more reductions.

These higher costs and reductions in available Medicare Advantage plans will disproportionately impact low-income seniors in rural areas, areas such as those I represent in South Dakota. Forty-one percent of those seniors in Medicare Advantage plans have annual incomes of less than $20,000 and are least able to bear the higher costs forced on them by ObamaCare. Yet it is precisely those seniors who are bearing the greatest burden when it comes to paying for ObamaCare.

On top of that, reports indicate that plans are responding to the cuts by reducing their footprint in rural markets, giving these seniors fewer options when it comes to choosing a health care plan.

Finally, similar to so many other Americans suffering under ObamaCare, seniors on a Medicare Advantage plan may no longer be able to keep the doctors they have and like thanks to these cuts. Between Medicare cuts and the new ObamaCare tax insurance companies are facing this year, companies are scrambling for ways to be able to afford to continue their plans. Frequently their only option is to narrow their networks of doctors and hospitals or raise their copayments and deductibles, thus reducing seniors' choices and increasing their health care costs.

Republicans have long touted the quality care and patient choice offered by Medicare Advantage plans. When the health care bill was being considered in 2010, we warned at the time that Medicare cuts being proposed in the bill would hurt seniors, damage Medicare Advantage, and weaken a program already hastening toward bankruptcy. Despite this, Democrats not only supported the health care bill, they also voted twice against measures to repeal the law's cuts to Medicare Advantage.

Now it seems many Democrats have changed their minds. Earlier this month, 19 Democratic Senators, most of whom voted for ObamaCare in 2010, joined a number of Republicans in sending a letter to Marilyn Tavenner, Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, urging her not to cut Medicare Advantage. Let's hope it is not too little too late.

Democrats' support for the Medicare Advantage letter to the CMS Administrator reflects their increasing unease with their support for ObamaCare. Once they planned to tout ObamaCare to voters as a legislative triumph, but Democrats up for reelection now can't run away from the law fast enough.

In fact, the President has repeatedly delayed parts of the health care law to give Democrats political cover. Each delay is a tacit admission that, yes, this law will hurt jobs and the economy because, after all, if this law is not going to hurt jobs and the economy, why do we have to continually delay it? The latest number is somewhere in the twenties. I have heard 24, 27, and 28 different delays of the harmful effects and impacts of ObamaCare.

If the health care law is the panacea the American people were promised, Democrats and the President would be working to implement the law faster, not slow it down.

The only possible reason to delay the law is because its implementation is going to hurt. It is a little awkward when your signature legislation has to be repeatedly delayed to give the folks who voted for it a better chance of keeping their jobs.

Unfortunately, the President doesn't seem to have learned his lesson. Not content with the damage his health care law is doing to an already struggling economy—a recent CBO report warned that the health care law may result in up to 2.5 million fewer full-time workers—he continues to push policies that will further weaken an already sluggish economy, such as a minimum wage bill that CBO reports would result in up to 1 million fewer jobs.

At a time when our labor force participation rate is at Jimmy Carter-era lows, a law that would further reduce the number of full-time workers is one of the worst possible things we could do for our economy. People working produces economic growth. The fewer people working, the less likely we are to produce the kind of growth we need to pull our economy out of the slump it has been in throughout the President's administration. What we need right now are policies that will create jobs and encourage businesses to expand and invest in our economy and in our workers.

If the President were really serious about reversing the economic stagnation of the past 5 years, he wouldn't be pushing his health care bill or a minimum wage hike. Instead, he would be calling the Senate majority leader and urging him to take up and pass trade promotion authority, which will create thousands of jobs for American workers. He would sign off on the Keystone Pipeline and the 42,000-plus jobs it would support. He would join bipartisan majorities in both Houses of Congress to support a repeal of the job-destroying medical device tax in his health care law, a tax that has already cost more than 33,000 jobs.

American families and workers are hurting. They have been hit hard by ObamaCare and the Obama economy. It is time for the President to give them some help.

I would argue there are bipartisan issues out there. The trade promotion authority, repealing the medical device tax, and the Keystone Pipeline have broad bipartisan majorities here in the Senate. We had a vote a year ago on the budget on repealing the medical device tax, and 79 Senators, including 30 Democrats, voted for that. The last time we had a vote here on the Keystone Pipeline, 62 voted in support of it, again representing broad bipartisan support for that initiative. We know the trade promotion authority is something that enjoys support from both Republicans and Democrats. All of these initiatives enjoy broad bipartisan support and are known job creators. Those are the types of things we ought to be focused on, not things that, according to the Congressional Budget Office, are going to cost more jobs.

Implementation of ObamaCare, according to the CBO report a couple weeks ago, will reduce the number of workers in this country by 2.5 million over the next decade. It also said it would reduce overall wages by about 1 percent. So that is fewer jobs and lower take-home pay.

Last week we had the report come out from the Congressional Budget Office that raising the minimum wage could cost up to 1 million jobs at the same time it is raising prices. So the very people we are trying to help are going to have fewer jobs and higher costs. How does that solve the problems our economy faces? How does that get people in this country back to work? How does that grow and expand our economy in a way that creates greater opportunity for middle-class families?

There are things we can do on which there is broad bipartisan support that are known job creators, that are known to expand and grow our economy. I would add to that list as well reforming our Tax Code. We have lost so much in terms of economic growth in the past few years since the recession and coming out of that recession because we have had subpar growth. We haven't seen the type of growth rates we normally see and experience coming out of a recession during a recovery. As a consequence, we have much larger deficits because when the economy is growing at a sluggish, anemic, slow rate, it means there are fewer people working, fewer people investing, fewer

people making money, and therefore fewer people paying taxes. We need the opposite. We need a growing, expanding, vibrant, dynamic economy fueled by policies in Washington, DC, that make it less expensive and less difficult to create jobs rather than more expensive and more difficult, which is what we see coming out of the Obama administration and the Democratic majority here in the Senate.

We can do better. We must do better for the American people, for middle-class families who have been hit hard by the effects and the impacts of this economy with fewer jobs, lower take-home pay, higher premiums, higher deductibles, and fewer choices of doctors and hospitals under ObamaCare. These policies are hurting the American people. We need to put policies in place that will help the American people by growing our economy and creating more jobs for middle-class Americans.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JAMES MAXWELL MOODY, JR., TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of James Maxwell Moody, Jr., of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11:15 a.m. will be equally divided and controlled in the usual form.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

JUDGE WILLIAM K. SESSIONS III

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for almost two decades Judge William Sessions has served as a Federal judge for the District of Vermont. Last month Judge Sessions announced he would take senior status later this year. I have worked with Senator SANDERS, Representative WELCH, and the Vermont Bar Association to convene a merit commission to find highly qualified candidates to serve on the Vermont District Court so I can then recommend them to the President.

I know I speak on behalf of all Vermonters, no matter what their background, when I thank Judge Sessions for his years of distinguished public service and applaud him for agreeing to continue his judicial service even after he takes senior status this summer. Because of his continued dedication, Vermont will have one of the most highly respected and extraordinarily capable jurists on the Federal bench. I am proud to call Judge Sessions my friend, and I am honored to have cast my vote to confirm his nomination 18 years ago.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD at the completion of my remarks a Rutland Herald article written by Brent Curtis that recounts his many accomplishments.

There are only two authorized district judgeships in Vermont. We are the second smallest State in the Union. So, when President Clinton asked for my recommendation to fill a vacancy in my native State, I did not take this task lightly. I knew the people of Vermont deserved a judge with integrity, intelligence, and fairness, somebody whom anybody could go before—plaintiff or defendant, rich or poor, no matter their political background—and know they would have a fair hearing.

During my time in private practice as a litigant and then as State's attorney in Vermont, I experienced firsthand the tradition of legal excellence we have in Vermont. I know many Vermont lawyers who are among the best this country has to offer, and Bill Sessions earned a reputation as one of the finest trial lawyers in the State. He was widely respected by prosecutors and defense lawyers, and by the plaintiff and defense bars alike. He was praised by those who had been his co-counsel, by State and Federal judges and prosecutors, and even by those who had been his opposing counsel in court. It was a privilege to submit his name to the White House for nomination to the U.S. District Court. At the time, I told President Clinton this would be one nomination he would never have to question his judgment in making because he would have somebody who would always serve the country so well. The Senate confirmed him unanimously on August 11, 1995.

Judge Sessions received his B.A. from Middlebury College in 1969. Upon his graduation with honors from the George Washington University Law School in 1972, Judge Sessions served his country in the U.S. Army from 1972 to 1977 and in active service from 1972 to 1973. He also served as a law clerk to another friend of mine, Judge Hilton Dier of the Addison County District Court. Before his service on the Federal bench, Judge Sessions contributed to his community as an adjunct professor at Vermont Law School; in private practice; as the executive director of the Addison County Youth Services Bureau; and as a public defender in Addison County, VT.

During his years of service on the Federal bench, Judge Sessions has worked tirelessly to ensure that all those who come before him are treated fairly and with dignity. He is a judge who has taken seriously his commitment to both justice and the American people. He served for many years as a member of the Judicial Conference, composed of the leaders of the Federal judiciary.

Judge Sessions also served for a decade on the U.S. Sentencing Commission, eventually serving as its Chairman. Three Presidents, both Democratic and Republican, nominated him to this Commission, and the Senate confirmed him unanimously each time. As a commissioner, Judge Sessions made deeply significant contributions to American sentencing policy. He played an important role in the reduction of the sentencing disparity for crack and powder cocaine offenses. He has done vital work to improve the Federal Sentencing Guidelines. This was especially important following a number of Supreme Court cases that gave judges more discretion in the sentences they impose. Even after his time on the Sentencing Commission, Judge Sessions continued to work for better sentencing policy, publishing an article in a journal of the University of Virginia School of Law that explained how the three branches of government could work together to improve sentencing in America.

Judge Sessions has not forgotten what it is to be a Vermonter. He still finds time on weekends to be at farmers markets around Vermont. He is a familiar face at the booth for Blue Ledge Farm, a small Vermont dairy started by his daughter, Hannah, and son-in-law, Greg. I think of a picture of him holding a grandchild in one hand and making change for one of the customers with the other.

He is one of our country's most respected jurists. He is a lawyer's lawyer and a judge's judge. Marcelle and I think of him and Abi, his wife, as dear personal friends.

Our justice system has benefited a great deal from Judge Sessions' years of service. I thank Judge Sessions for all he has done as a Federal judge. I thank him for continuing to serve as a model jurist.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Rutland Herald, Feb. 16, 2014]

SESSIONS REFLECTS ON YEARS ON AND OFF THE BENCH

(By Brent Curtis)

U.S. District Judge William K. Sessions III will shift to senior status.

Long before he was making decisions in a courtroom, federal Judge William Sessions III was working to keep people out of them.

With only months remaining before he shifts to senior status in June, Sessions, who turned 67 this month, can look back over two

decades of rulings that carried both constitutional and criminal ramifications.

But before he was tapped by President Bill Clinton to serve as a federal judge in Vermont in 1995, and before he began a career as a trial lawyer and civil rights practitioner in the 1970s, Sessions was a teacher and an advocate to troubled youth and prison inmates.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Middlebury College in 1969, Sessions went to Washington, D.C., to attend the George Washington University Law School.

Before his legal studies began, he volunteered to be a reading and math teacher to inmates in the Washington, D.C., prison system.

''It was a profound experience for me,'' Sessions said in an interview. ''I was nervous and scared but I learned how to relate with these guys and I learned and loved their stories, and decided at that point I wanted to work with kids and young people.''

He added, ''I had this unbelievably moving experience and then the question was 'How do I get involved in helping young people so they don't end up in places like prison?' ''

His initial work toward that goal was to open a youth center for delinquent and troubled kids in Middlebury. But when a job as a public defender opened up in the mid 1970s, Sessions said he seized the opportunity and spent the next two decades blending his humanitarian and legal passions.

FOCUSED ON LAW

With that kind of background, the role of a judge—whose job it is to remain impartial during often emotionally and politically charged proceedings—might seem too restrictive.

But Sessions said that, like all judges, he has strived to suppress his biases and focus on the law and the legal questions that have come before him.

The one area where he said his humanitarianism shows in the courtroom is in the courtesy he strives to show to everyone who stands before him.

''I love treating people with respect,'' he said. ''In this courtroom, I take a great deal of pride in seeing that a little bit of Vermont takes place in the courtroom. . . . Each defendant is treated respectfully. I think that's how people treat each other in Vermont.''

He has also tried to look beyond a person's crime to consider variables about their risk to commit future offenses, their rehabilitative needs including mental health and substance abuse and the message that a potential sentence might send to the broader public.

''I would say that I look closely at the nature of the crime and whether they're taking responsibility for it,'' he said. ''In all the studies I've read, if someone is accountable for their crime, they're much less likely to re-offend.''

''On the other hand, I feel really strongly that human characteristics, the need for rehabilitation and the need to protect society by addressing those issues that a particular defendant has are also important,'' the judge added.

Over the years, Sessions has heard countless criminal cases, including the first death penalty case in the state in more than half a century. In that case, involving convicted murderer Donald Fell, Sessions ruled in 2002 that the Federal Death Penalty Act of 1994 was unconstitutional. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals later reversed that ruling and an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court wasn't taken up by the justices. Because Fell's case remains under appeal, Sessions said he is unable to discuss it.

Sessions also served for 11 years on the U.S. Sentencing Commission which was established to address disparities in criminal sentencing.

Politics surrounds the group, with congressmen split over whether they wanted to create it in 1999 and insistence among legislators that the commissions members be made up equally of judges nominated by conservatives and liberals.

JUDGES UNITED

But the agendas of the politicians who created the commission didn't enter into the work of the judges who Sessions said were routinely united in their opinions on changes designed to make sentencing guidelines and outcomes more uniform from state to state.

And in no arena were the judges more in agreement, he said, than in their work on addressing the disparities in sentencing for those guilty of possessing crack cocaine.

Prior to the commission's work on crack cocaine sentences, a 100–to–1 disparity existed between sentencing for crack and powder cocaine.

A defendant guilty of possessing 5 grams of crack cocaine faced a five-year minimum sentence while a person would have to possess 500 grams of powder cocaine to receive the same punishment.

''It stemmed from a fear in the 1980s that crack cocaine was a devastating drug that was much more serious than powder cocaine,'' Sessions said. ''So the penalties were extraordinarily high. Five grams of cocaine is an extraordinarily small amount.''

After it became clear that there wasn't much difference between crack and powder in terms of ill effects, and after it became clear that those being sentenced for crack cocaine possession were disproportionately black people, Sessions said it became obvious to all the judges on the commission that their first task needed to be a change to the crack sentencing guidelines.

''We went around the room and we were each asked what we wanted to change first and the judges unanimously spoke of changing the crack versus powder cocaine disparity,'' he said. ''The reason really stems not only out of the criminal justice system but on the impact on minority communities in the country.''

In 2004, the commission changed the sentencing guidelines for crack cocaine possession and in 2010 Congress passed changes to the required amount someone must possess to receive a minimum five or 10–year jail sentence.

The changes were made retroactively and had the effect, on average, of reducing jail sentences for crack cocaine possession by three years.

''That meant that 20,000 people in prison were resentenced for crack cocaine and many were released immediately,'' Sessions said, calculating that about 25 cases in Vermont were affected by the sentencing change.

NATIONAL IMPACT

Beyond the criminal cases, Sessions has decided a number of cases with weighty constitutional import.

Thanks to being in a small state with just two federal judges, Sessions said he has received a disproportionate amount of cases with potential national ramifications over the years.

One of the most far reaching cases he's decided was a 2007 case in which he ruled in favor of Vermont, New York and a number of environmental groups in a case involving several automobile manufacturers.

The case was based on regulations passed in California and then adopted in Vermont and New York that sought to reduce automobile emissions by establishing higher mileage requirements for new cars.

''(The auto manufacturers) sued in each of the circuits and our case came up first,'' Sessions said. ''It was a question of whether it was a requirement that was justified constitutionally.''

Car manufacturers argued that the changes would have a severe impact on the industry and they argued that global warming hadn't been established.

Over the course of a six-week trial, Sessions heard from dozens of witnesses before issuing a 350-page decision that upheld the state's regulations.

''I've been told it's in textbooks on environmental law,'' he said.

The shift to senior status will likely reduce Sessions' workload, as a new federal judge will be appointed to the district. But while he said he's looking forward to time with his four grandchildren and hiking and biking with his wife, the judge said he isn't thinking yet about slowing his work on the bench.

''I'm not planning on slowing down at all,'' he said. ''At this point, I'm a pretty young guy. I'm going to be 67 this month, but I feel like 50.''

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is currently considering the Moody nomination.

Mr. LEAHY. Is there a time agreement on the nomination?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has now expired.

Mr. LEAHY. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of James Maxwell Moody, Jr., of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas?

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second? There appears to be a sufficient second.

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 4, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 39 Ex.]

YEAS—95

Alexander	Cruz	King
Ayotte	Donnelly	Kirk
Baldwin	Durbin	Klobuchar
Barrasso	Enzi	Landrieu
Begich	Feinstein	Leahy
Bennet	Fischer	Lee
Blumenthal	Flake	Levin
Blunt	Franken	Manchin
Booker	Gillibrand	Markey
Boozman	Graham	McCain
Boxer	Grassley	McCaskill
Brown	Hagan	McConnell
Burr	Harkin	Menendez
Cantwell	Hatch	Merkley
Cardin	Heinrich	Mikulski
Carper	Heitkamp	Moran
Casey	Heller	Murkowski
Chambliss	Hirono	Murphy
Coats	Hoeven	Murray
Coburn	Inhofe	Paul
Cochran	Isakson	Portman
Collins	Johanns	Pryor
Coons	Johnson (SD)	Reed
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Reid
Cornyn	Kaine	Rockefeller

Rubio	Stabenow	Walsh
Sanders	Tester	Warner
Schatz	Thune	Warren
Schumer	Toomey	Whitehouse
Scott	Udall (CO)	Wicker
Sessions	Udall (NM)	Wyden
Shaheen	Vitter	

NAYS—4

Crapo	Roberts
Risch	Shelby

NOT VOTING—1

Nelson

The nomination was confirmed.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I am very pleased to express my strong support for two highly qualified nominees to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California:

Superior Court Judge Beth Freeman, and James Donato.

I recommended these candidates to President Obama after my bipartisan screening committee gave them both strong recommendations.

I am very pleased they will soon fill two longstanding vacancies in the Northern District of California.

Judge Freeman earned her law degree from Harvard Law School in 1979, and she served in the County Counsel's Office in San Mateo for 18 years.

She has spent the last 12 years on the San Mateo Superior Court, including as presiding judge and assistant presiding judge. She has presided over more than a thousand trials, and she has experience in both civil and criminal cases.

I have received letters of support for Judge Freeman from Don Horsley, president of the San Mateo Board of Supervisors and former chair of the County's Domestic Violence Council, and from Stephen Wagstaffe, San Mateo District Attorney.

These letters are strong endorsements for Judge Freeman, and I will simply quote what Mr. Wagstaffe said: ''In 36 years as a prosecutor in San Mateo County, I have not seen a better judge in all respects than Judge Freeman.''

That is very high praise, and I am pleased Judge Freeman soon will be confirmed and begin her service as a Federal judge in San Jose.

Let me now describe Jim Donato, who once confirmed will serve in San Francisco.

Mr. Donato earned his law degree from Stanford Law School where he was a Senior Editor of the Stanford Law Review. He clerked for Judge Procter Hug on the Ninth Circuit.

He served for 3 years in the City Attorney's Office in San Francisco. He has built a distinguished record over two decades as a private practitioner handling complex civil cases such as antitrust cases, at Cooley LLP and Shearman & Sterling LLP.

Complex civil experience is especially important in Northern California because the Northern District's docket is 84 percent civil, according to the most recent statistics.

Mr. Donato also is a leader in the San Francisco legal community where he has devoted much of his time to the Bar Association of San Francisco, including as its President in 2008.

I have great confidence Mr. Donato will be an outstanding federal district judge.

Let me close by noting that each of these nominees will fill a judicial vacancy that has been designated as a ''judicial emergency'' by the Judicial Conference of the United States.

The Northern District's weighted caseload per judgeship is over 13 percent above the national average. Filings per active judge are up 17 percent since 2008. In fact, it now takes 27 percent longer for a civil case to get to trial than it did in 2010.

The vacancy Judge Freeman would fill has existed for over 800 days. The vacancy Mr. Donato would fill has existed for over 500 days.

It is long past time for these seats to be filled. Indeed, each of these nominees should have been confirmed in 2013—but, unfortunately, each had to be renominated in this session and voted out of the Judiciary Committee for a second time. This wasted several months during which each could have been serving as a Federal Judge.

Nevertheless, I am very pleased that, today, Judge Freeman and Jim Donato will be confirmed and will be able to assume their duties shortly.

I urge my colleagues to support both of these fine nominees.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees prior to a vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Donato nomination.

Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the next nominee, James Donato of California, was originally nominated in June of 2013. He was voted out of the Judiciary Committee unanimously.

I have heard from my friends on the Republican side that we should be concerned about emergency vacancies. This is an emergency vacancy. He was reported out unanimously for the first time last October. He had to be reported out a second time this year—again, unanimously. He has the strong support of the two Senators from California. So holding up and having a filibuster and going through all of that on this nomination is the kind of game playing that hurts the Federal judiciary. It is almost like the efforts made by our friends on the other side in closing down the government last year, and this is just a slow way to close down the Federal judiciary.

I urge immediate consideration and confirmation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, may I direct a question through the Chair to the distinguished chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

Does the chairman of the committee think we should have a recorded vote on this?

Mr. LEAHY. I would be happy to have a voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time in opposition?

Mr. REID. No one is standing. I yield back the time.

Mr. HATCH. I yield back the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the time is yielded back.

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of James Donato, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mark L. Pryor, Mark Begich, Robert Menendez, Tom Harkin, Amy Klobuchar, Christopher Murphy, Patty Murray, Jon Tester, Richard J. Durbin, Barbara Boxer, Angus S. King, Jr., Claire McCaskill, Richard Blumenthal, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of James Donato, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. HATCH (when his name was called). Present.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) and the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 55, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 40 Ex.]

YEAS—55

Baldwin	Harkin	Pryor
Begich	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reid
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rockefeller
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Sanders
Boxer	Kaine	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Landrieu	Stabenow
Carper	Leahy	Tester
Casey	Manchin	Udall (CO)
Collins	Markey	Udall (NM)
Coons	McCaskill	Walsh
Donnelly	Menendez	Warner
Durbin	Merkley	Warren
Feinstein	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Franken	Murkowski	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murphy	
Hagan	Murray	

NAYS—42

Alexander	Chambliss	Crapo
Ayotte	Coats	Cruz
Barrasso	Coburn	Enzi
Blunt	Cochran	Fischer
Boozman	Corker	Flake
Burr	Cornyn	Graham

Grassley	Lee	Rubio
Heller	McCain	Scott
Hoeven	McConnell	Sessions
Inhofe	Moran	Shelby
Isakson	Paul	Thune
Johanns	Portman	Toomey
Johnson (WI)	Risch	Vitter
Kirk	Roberts	Wicker

ANSWERED ''PRESENT'' —1

Hatch

NOT VOTING—2

Levin Nelson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the yeas are 55, the nays are 42, 1 Senator voting ''present.'' The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, Chairman LEAHY has told me that he has no need for a rollcall vote. I would hope others would also agree.

NOMINATION OF JAMES DONATO TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of James Donato, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is yielded back. There will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, for the benefit of the people of this country who have been listening to the complaints in the Senate from Senators about not approving judges, let me remind everybody that at this point we have approved over 220 judges appointed by this President. Only two have been disapproved. That is more than 99 percent.

As far as the second term of this administration is concerned, I want to say that after the Senate confirms the three district court judges we will approve today, we will have confirmed 50 of President Obama's judicial nominees during his second term. Up to this point in President Bush's second term, the Senate had confirmed only 21. So that is 50 to 21 as far as the production of this Congress for approving judges.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have deep respect for my friend the senior Senator from Iowa. But he has been listening to himself talk too much and he is starting to believe it. Everyone knows we are in this situation because the Republicans are slow-walking every nomination—every nomination. There is no reason, no reason whatsoever, that we are having votes on cloture on these judges, as Senator LEAHY pointed out earlier, reported out unanimously.

It is a waste of the taxpayers' time to go through the process we have been going through. We are going to continue working to move the backlog. We have scores of judges, district court judges, and we have a number of circuit court judges. We are going to, in the near future, file cloture on all of them. If that is what the Republicans want us to do, then that is what we will do. The American people will see the colossal waste of time we have been going through, not only on district court judges but circuit court judges and all nominations.

I would suggest to my friend the senior Senator from Iowa he not believe his own words because they are simply not true.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of James Donato, of California, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of California?

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON), and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. CORKER) would have voted ''yea.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 90, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 41 Ex.]

YEAS—90

Alexander	Flake	McCaskill
Ayotte	Franken	McConnell
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Menendez
Barrasso	Graham	Merkley
Begich	Grassley	Mikulski
Bennet	Hagan	Moran
Blumenthal	Harkin	Murkowski
Booker	Hatch	Murphy
Boozman	Heinrich	Murray
Boxer	Heitkamp	Paul
Brown	Heller	Portman
Burr	Hirono	Pryor
Cantwell	Hoeven	Reed
Cardin	Inhofe	Reid
Carper	Isakson	Rockefeller
Casey	Johanns	Rubio
Chambliss	Johnson (WI)	Sanders
Coats	Kaine	Schatz
Coburn	King	Schumer
Cochran	Kirk	Scott
Collins	Klobuchar	Sessions
Coons	Landrieu	Shaheen
Cornyn	Leahy	Stabenow
Cruz	Lee	Tester
Donnelly	Levin	Thune
Enzi	Manchin	Toomey
Feinstein	Markey	Udall (CO)
Fischer	McCain	Udall (NM)
Vitter	Warren	Wicker
Walsh	Whitehouse	Wyden

NAYS—5

Blunt	Risch	Shelby
Crapo	Roberts	

NOT VOTING—5

Corker	Johnson (SD)	Warner
Durbin	Nelson	

The nomination was confirmed.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees prior to a vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Freeman nomination.

Who yields time?

If no one yields time, time will be charged equally.

Mr. COATS. I yield back the remaining time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, all time is yielded back.

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Beth Labson Freeman, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Benjamin L. Cardin, Mark L. Pryor, Mark Begich, Robert Menendez, Tom Harkin, Amy Klobuchar, Christopher Murphy, Patty Murray, Jon Tester, Richard J. Durbin, Barbara Boxer, Angus S. King, Jr., Claire McCaskill, Richard Blumenthal, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Beth Labson Freeman, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. HATCH (when his name was called). Present.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 56, nays 42, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 42 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Baldwin	Cardin	Franken
Begich	Carper	Gillibrand
Bennet	Casey	Hagan
Blumenthal	Collins	Harkin
Booker	Coons	Heinrich
Boxer	Donnelly	Heitkamp
Brown	Durbin	Hirono
Cantwell	Feinstein	Johnson (SD)

Kaine	Mikulski	Shaheen
King	Murkowski	Stabenow
Klobuchar	Murphy	Tester
Landrieu	Murray	Udall (CO)
Leahy	Pryor	Udall (NM)
Levin	Reed	Walsh
Manchin	Reid	Warner
Markey	Rockefeller	Warren
McCaskill	Sanders	Whitehouse
Menendez	Schatz	Wyden
Merkley	Schumer	

NAYS—42

Alexander	Enzi	McConnell
Ayotte	Fischer	Moran
Barrasso	Flake	Paul
Blunt	Graham	Portman
Boozman	Grassley	Risch
Burr	Heller	Roberts
Chambliss	Hoeven	Rubio
Coats	Inhofe	Scott
Coburn	Isakson	Sessions
Cochran	Johanns	Shelby
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Thune
Cornyn	Kirk	Toomey
Crapo	Lee	Vitter
Cruz	McCain	Wicker

ANSWERED ''PRESENT''—1

Hatch

NOT VOTING—1

Nelson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote the ayes are 56, the nays are 42, 1 Senator responded ''present.''

The motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote on the motion to invoke cloture and the motion to proceed to S. 1982 now occur at 3:30 p.m. this afternoon and the time from 2:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have also spoken to the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and he does not desire a rollcall vote on this next nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF BETH LABSON FREEMAN TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Beth Labson Freeman, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is yielded back. There will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield back my time.

Mr. REID. As do we.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas and nays are requested.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Beth Labson Freeman, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California?

The yeas and nays are ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 43 Ex.]

YEAS—91

Alexander	Franken	Moran
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Graham	Murphy
Barrasso	Grassley	Murray
Begich	Hagan	Paul
Bennet	Harkin	Portman
Blumenthal	Hatch	Pryor
Blunt	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Heitkamp	Reid
Boozman	Heller	Rubio
Boxer	Hirono	Sanders
Brown	Hoeven	Schatz
Burr	Isakson	Schumer
Cantwell	Johanns	Scott
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Sessions
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Shaheen
Casey	Kaine	Stabenow
Chambliss	King	Tester
Coburn	Klobuchar	Thune
Cochran	Landrieu	Toomey
Collins	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Coons	Lee	Udall (NM)
Corker	Levin	Vitter
Cornyn	Manchin	Walsh
Cruz	Markey	Warner
Donnelly	McCain	Warren
Durbin	McCaskill	Whitehouse
Enzi	McConnell	Wicker
Feinstein	Menendez	Wyden
Fischer	Merkley	
Flake	Mikulski	

NAYS—7

Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Crapo	Risch	
Inhofe	Roberts	

NOT VOTING—2

Nelson	Rockefeller

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to thank the majority leader and the Democratic floor staff for taking the necessary steps to confirm the four judicial nominees we have just confirmed between last night and today. I am sure the people in Connecticut, Arkansas, and California are thankful that their districts now have judges to help alleviate the heavy caseload in those districts and that they will now be able to have their cases decided in a more expeditious manner.

There are 28 more judicial nominees still currently pending on the Executive Calendar in States such as Tennessee, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Washington, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, and Wisconsin.

I hope Senate Republicans will not continue to politicize the filling of judicial vacancies. Americans in those States want a functioning Federal judiciary at full capacity so they can seek and obtain justice in an expeditious manner.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I was regrettably unable to be present for vote number 41, the confirmation of James Donato to be a United States District Judge for the Northern District of California. I was happy to see that he was confirmed, and if I had been present, I would have voted yea on the nomination.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:59 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

COMPREHENSIVE VETERANS HEALTH AND BENEFITS AND MILITARY RETIREMENT PAY RESTORATION ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 3:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

If no one yields time, the time will be equally divided between both sides.

The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, every Veterans Day and every Memorial Day many of us, regardless of our political views, go out into our communities and we speak about our respect and admiration for the veterans of this country. As chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs for the last year, I have learned that regardless of political ideology, virtually all Members of the Congress in fact mean what they say and do understand and do appreciate the enormous sacrifices veterans and their families—and their families—have made for our Nation.

Sadly, everybody in this country knows we are living at a time when the Congress is virtually dysfunctional and partisanship runs rampant. But I have found on my committee and in the Congress as a whole that Members do understand the sacrifices made by the men and women who put their lives on the line and do, although we have differences of opinion, want to do the right thing to defend those who have defended us.

The good news is that President Obama and the Congress, in a bipartisan way, have made significant

progress in addressing a number of the problems facing veterans in this country. The President's budgets have been generous and I think Congress has acted in a responsible way.

That is the good news. But the bad news is that we still have a very long way to go if we are to keep faith with those who have put their lives on the line to defend us. We have made progress, but we still have a long way to go. I hope very much that we will go down that road together and we will tell the American people that in the midst of all of the partisanship, all of the politics, at least on this one issue we can stand together and protect the interests of those people who have sacrificed so much for our country.

Congress cannot bring back to their families those who died in battle. As the Presiding Officer knows, just in the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have lost over 6,700 troops. Congress cannot restore the legs and the arms and the eyesight that roadside explosions have taken away from brave men and women. Congress cannot simply snap its fingers and magically cure the hundreds of thousands who returned from Iraq and Afghanistan with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury or those who suffer from the pain and humiliation of sexual assault. As a nation, however, while we cannot magically solve those problems, we can in fact—and it is our responsibility, in fact—do everything we can to help ease and ameliorate the problems facing our veterans and their families. We can't solve it all—we know that—but we can go further in ameliorating some of the problems facing veterans and their families.

I will give my colleagues a few examples. Congress can help the 2,300 men and women who were looking forward to having families but who suffered reproductive injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan. I believe Senator MURRAY will come to the floor. She has long been a champion of this issue, as have been others. Let me give my colleagues one case out of 2,300: Army veteran Matt Keil of Colorado was wounded by sniper fire in Iraq in 2007. The sniper's round struck Matt's neck, causing severe damage to a vital artery and his spinal cord. Through sheer determination and with the love and resolve of his wife Tracy, Matt's condition improved. He and Tracy began to consider having children. Doctors assured them that having children could be possible with the help of in vitro fertilization. The Keil family paid more than $30,000 for reproductive treatments. Congress can help the Keil family and others to ease that financial burden. That is a cost of war. We should be there for that family and for the other families who want the opportunity to have children.

Congress can help the tens of thousands of family members who every single day provide loving care for those who were severely injured in World War II, in Korea, in Vietnam, and in other wars. Let me give my colleagues another example.

In March of 1969, Miles Epling was on patrol in Vietnam when a booby trap detonated, killing some of his fellow marines and leaving him without legs. He returned home to West Virginia in a wheelchair. From that point on, he has required around-the-clock help from those around him. His family provided that help without receiving any training, any assistance or any financial support.

Here is the very good news—and we should be very proud of this, in a bipartisan way, as a Congress: In 2010, 4 years ago, Congress passed a very strong and excellent caregivers program for post-9/11 veterans. It is a program that is working well in providing significant help to caregivers of those post-9/11 veterans. I want everybody to put themselves in the place of a wife or sister or mother or brother who around the clock—around the clock, 24/7, 365 days a year—is providing care to folks who have suffered serious injuries in one war or another. We provided support for those caregivers post-9/11, for Iraq and Afghanistan, but we did not do that for the other wars. Now is the time for us to expand the caregivers program for the families of all disabled veterans who are in the same position that Miles is in. That is the fair thing to do, that is the right thing to do, and that is included in this comprehensive piece of legislation.

Because we have the moral obligation to do the very best we can for veterans, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee has brought forth comprehensive legislation that is strongly supported by virtually every veteran and military organization in the country. Today I thank the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Military Officers Association of America, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, the Gold Star Wives of America, and the dozens of other veterans organizations that are strongly supporting this comprehensive piece of legislation.

In their statement of support, the DAV writes:

> This massive omnibus bill—

That is the bill that is going to be on the floor in a short period of time. The DAV writes:

> This massive omnibus bill, unprecedented in our modern experience, would create, expand, advance, and extend a number of VA benefits, services and programs that are important to DAV and to our members. For example, responding to a call from DAV as a leading veterans organization, it would create a comprehensive family caregiver support program for all generations of severely wounded, injured and ill veterans. Also, the bill would authorize advance appropriations for VA's mandatory funding accounts to ensure that in any government shutdown environment in the future, veterans benefits payments would not be delayed or put in jeopardy. This measure also would provide additional financial support to survivors of servicemembers who die in the line of duty, as well as expanded access for them to GI Bill educational benefits. A two-plus year stalemate in VA's authority to lease facilities for health care treatment and other purposes would be solved by this bill. These are but a few—

> ''A few''—

> of the myriad provisions of this bill that would improve the lives, health, and prospects of veterans—especially the wounded, injured and ill—and their loved ones.

That is from the Disabled American Veterans. I thank them very much for their support. The truth is that we have letters of support that are similar in nature from dozens of other veterans organizations, and we thank them again for their support.

Madam President, may I ask the time situation—how much time each side has and how much time is remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority has 24 minutes remaining of the 35 minutes originally granted, and the minority has 35 minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. Very good.

What I would like to do now is yield to the former chairperson of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, somebody who has done an outstanding job for veterans. She has focused on one issue that I feel very strongly about; that is, the need to help those veterans who would like to have children but as a result of war wounds are unable to do so.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, would the Senator yield for a unanimous consent request?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized following the remarks of the Senator from Washington.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. I thank you, Madam President. And I thank the chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee for putting together this very good piece of legislation we are about to consider.

It is no secret that in our Nation's Capital we are sharply divided on any number of economic and political issues that are facing average Americans right now. But I have come to the floor today to talk about one issue on which we are rarely divided; that is, our duty to keep the promise we have made to provide not only care but opportunity to all those who have honorably served in our Nation's Armed Forces. It unites even the most unlikely partners because we realize we have all made a promise to those who have signed up to serve, and we all need to keep it because there is so much on the line.

When our brave men and women volunteered to protect our Nation, we promised them we would take care of them and their families when they returned home. We need to ask ourselves, are we doing enough for our Nation's veterans? So this comprehensive legislation before us today really is the test

for a lot of Members of Congress. Can we put politics aside now for the good of our Nation's veterans? Can we show these heroes, despite our differences, that we will work as diligently toward getting them the benefits and care they have earned as they have worked for our Nation. I hope we can. And I say that because the investments in this bill are a lot more than numbers on a page. They are life-changing programs for veterans who are looking to take the skills they have learned from the battlefield to the boardroom. It is support for the countless victims of military sexual assault, who are desperate to come out of the shadows. It is providing the dream of having a family to those who are suffering from some of the most devastating wounds of war. It is timely investment in the very biggest priorities of our Nation's heroes. So I would like to use the remainder of my time to highlight just a few of the investments that are included in this bill and how they translate to the lives of our veterans and their families.

For those who have worn our Nation's uniform, particularly for those young veterans who have spent the last decade being shuttled back and forth to war zones half a world away, the road home is not always smooth, the red-tape is often long, and the transition from the battlefield to the workplace is never easy. This should not be the case. We should not let the skills and training our Nation's veterans have already attained go to waste. We cannot afford to have our Nation's heroes unable to find a job to support their families, without an income that provides stability, or without work that provides the pride and sense of purpose that is so critical to the transition home.

That is why I am proud that in this legislation we are considering today we reauthorize and build on many of the provisions that were part of my VOW to Hire Heroes Act, which was signed into law by President Obama in 2011. Double-digit unemployment rates for veterans used to be the norm, but since VOW became law the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is now on par with nonveterans. And while recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics proves that these programs work, we still have more work to be done, and that is addressed in this legislation.

I also believe the great strength of our military is in the character and dedication of our men and women who wear the uniform. It is the courage of these Americans to volunteer to serve that is the Pentagon's greatest asset. Our servicemembers volunteer to face danger, to put their lives on the line, to protect our country and our people.

It is no longer a secret that sexual assault continues to plague the ranks of our military services, which is another issue this comprehensive legislation addresses. I think we all agree it is absolutely unconscionable that a fellow servicemember—the person whom you rely on to have your back and be there for you—would commit such a terrible crime. Even worse is the prevalence of these crimes. It is appalling that they commit such a personal violation of their brother or sister in uniform.

The National Defense Authorization Act that we passed last year took some historic action to help servicemembers access the resources they need to seek justice without fear, including a provision I authored to create a new category of legal advocates called special victims' counsels who would be responsible for advocating on behalf of the interests of the victim. But we still have a long road ahead of us before we put an end to these shameful acts and meanwhile provide all the necessary resources to those who have, unfortunately, been impacted. Thankfully, the chairman's legislation aims to do just that with provisions to improve the delivery of care and benefits to veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military.

When our best and brightest put on a uniform and join the U.S. Armed Forces, they do so with the understanding they will sacrifice much in the name of defending our country and its people. But that sacrifice should not have to come in the form of unwanted sexual contact from within the ranks.

Finally, I wish to talk today about a provision that has been one of my top priorities in the Senate for a while now. It is a provision that builds upon our effort to improve VA services for women veterans and veterans with families.

As we all know, with the changing nature of our conflicts overseas, we have been seeing the brutal impact of improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, which means we are now seeing more and more servicemembers—both male and female—increasingly susceptible to reproductive, spinal, and traumatic brain injuries due to the weapons of war.

Thanks to modern medicine, many of these servicemembers are being kept alive, and they are returning home. Like so many of our veterans, these men and women come home looking to return to their lives, to find employment, and often to start a family. Yet what they find when they go to the VA today is that the fertility services that are available do not meet their very complex needs. In fact, veterans suffering from these injuries find the VA is today specifically barred from providing more advanced assisted reproduction techniques, such as IVF. They are told that despite the fact that they have made such an extreme sacrifice for our country, we cannot today provide them with the medical services they need to start a family.

These are veterans such as SSG Matt Keil and his wife Tracy. Staff Sergeant Keil was shot in the neck while on patrol in Iraq in 2007—6 weeks after he married the love of his life, Tracy. The bullet went through the right side of his neck, it hit a major artery, it went through his spinal cord, and it exited through his shoulder blade. Staff Sergeant Keil instantly became a quadriplegic. Doctors told Tracy, his wife, that her husband would be on a ventilator for the rest of his life and would never move his arms or his legs. Well, Staff Sergeant Keil eventually defied the odds and found himself off that ventilator and beginning the long journey of physical rehabilitation.

In fact, Tracy and her husband started talking and exploring the possibilities of having a family together. Having children was all they could talk about once they started to adjust to their new normal. With Staff Sergeant Keil's injuries preventing him from having children naturally, Tracy turned to the VA and began to explore her options for fertility treatments, but because of that VA ban she was turned down. So Tracy and Staff Sergeant Keil decided instead to pursue IVF through the private sector. Out of options, they decided this was important enough to them that they were willing to pay out of pocket to the tune of almost $32,000 per round of treatment.

Well, thankfully, on November 9, 2010, just after their first round of IVF, Staff Sergeant Keil and Tracy welcomed their twins, Matthew and Faith, into the world. Tracy told me—and I want to quote her:

> The day we had our children something changed in both of us. This is exactly what we had always wanted, our dreams had arrived.
>
> The VA, Congress and the American People have said countless times [to us] that they want to do everything they can to support my husband [and] make him feel whole again and this is your chance.
>
> Having a family is exactly what we needed to feel whole again. Please help us make these changes [to the law] so that other families can share in this experience.

Well, Tracy and Matt are not alone. There are many men and women out there who share this common thread of a desperate desire to fulfill their dream of starting a family, only to find that catastrophic wounds they sustained while defending our country are now preventing them from seeing that dream through.

As we all know, it should not be that way. Our Nation's heroes should not have to spend tens of thousands of dollars in the private sector to get the advanced reproductive treatments they need to start a family. They should not have to watch their marriages dissolve because of the stress of infertility in combination with the stresses of readjusting to a new life after severe injury, driving relationships to a breaking point. Any servicemember who sustains this type of serious injury deserves a lot more.

We came very close to making this bill a reality last Congress. In fact, with Tracy Keil sitting up in the gallery—like so many of our heroes who have joined us today—with Tracy watching, the Senate unanimously

passed this legislation. Unfortunately, what happened was that some Republicans in the House of Representatives refused to take up this bill and pass it. So time ran out last year and we were not able to get it to the President's desk.

But this effort is not over. This provision was the very first piece of legislation I introduced in this Congress, and there is excellent momentum to get it done. This is about giving our veterans, who sacrificed everything, every option we have to help them fulfill the simple dream of having a family. It says we are not turning our backs on the catastrophic reproductive wounds that have become a signature of these wars.

It says to all those brave men and women who did not ask questions when they were put in harm's way that we will not let politics get in the way of our commitment to you. This provision in the bill will reverse this troubling barrier to care and will bring the VA in line, finally, with the military which does provide these services under TRICARE.

Our women veterans deserve this. Our male veterans deserve this. Our military families deserve this. I am here today to urge my colleagues to support this bill, the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014. Our veterans do not ask for a lot. They should not have to. They have done everything that has been asked of them. They have been separated from their families through repeated deployments. They have sacrificed life and limb in combat. They have done all of this selflessly and with honor to our country.

We cannot allow our commitment to them to lapse or to get caught up in any kind of unrelated amendments or political grandstanding. So I thank the Senator from Vermont and his staff for their tireless work to bring this legislation to the floor. I hope we do the right thing now and get this legislation passed and get this legislation to the desk of the President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The Republican whip.

OBAMACARE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I see the Senator from North Carolina is here on the floor. I know he is likely here to respond to the Senator from Vermont and the Senator from Washington on the veterans bill that is on the floor, and what I believe is a much better alternative for us in dealing with the needs of our veterans in a way that is fiscally responsible.

But what I would like to do is to turn to another story that continues to unfold worse and worse news over time, that unfortunately we tend to get distracted from because there are so many other things that are happening. But when the President's signature health care bill, the Affordable Care Act, was signed into law 4 years ago, we knew that it did not just create a brand new health care entitlement. It actually weakened existing programs like Medicare and Medicaid.

For people who do not deal with these programs on a day-in and day-out basis, of course, Medicare is for seniors, for health care for seniors; Medicaid is a separate program which is shared by the States and the Federal Government to provide the safety net health care program for low-income Texans in my State.

But because of the massive new burdens that ObamaCare is placing on the health care safety net, which is already failing the neediest members of society, the share of physicians accepting new Medicaid patients in Texas has fallen from 67 percent in 2000 to only 32 percent in 2012. So in 2000, 67 percent of physicians would accept a new Medicaid patient. Today it is roughly one-third, one out of every three.

Of course, the reason for that is the Federal Government continues to pay less and less. Now I think it is roughly 50 cents on the dollar compared to private insurance to a physician who treats a Medicaid patient. So we know that many Texas physicians, including a majority of established primary care physicians, are not accepting new Medicaid patients at all because they are being asked essentially to work for 50 cents on the dollar, something they cannot afford to do.

Yet the architects of ObamaCare thought that it was a good idea to add millions more people to a broken program, one that already was not providing access to quality health care. This, of course, will further reduce the quality of Medicaid, which is one reason why many State Governors refused the Federal Government's request to actually expand the coverage of Medicaid absent reforms to fix it and make sure that it would work more fairly and better and more cost effectively. Of course, the consequence of that is it will make it even harder on the poorest and most vulnerable Americans to gain access to quality health care.

As for the Medicare program, of course that is for seniors, ObamaCare created a new panel of unelected bureaucrats known as the Independent Payment Advisory Board. What an innocuous bureaucratic-sounding name. Some people call it the IPAB. These are unelected bureaucrats who will decide whether your health care is worth a cost-benefit analysis.

What they will end up doing is slashing Medicare payments to doctors so that many physicians can no longer afford to see new Medicare patients and provide the treatment that those patients and their doctors believe they need and that they want. So it has become abundantly clear that the goal of ObamaCare is to make Medicare more like Medicaid. We know what that means. We know it is not hard to predict, that fewer and fewer doctors will treat Medicare patients and some will leave the program all together.

Why do we know that? Well, we have seen the experience with these new major cuts to Medicare Advantage. Not to confuse things too much, but Medicare Advantage is actually a private insurance alternative to traditional Medicare which pays doctors based on the services they provide. Medicare Advantage is a remarkably successful program that covers roughly 30 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries, close to 16 million people.

The funds to those programs, to those 30 million, to that program that benefits 30 million beneficiaries, are being slashed by approximately $308 billion as a result of ObamaCare. This is another one of these hidden problems with ObamaCare that is now just coming to light, even though we talked about it a lot back in 2009 and 2010. Now it is coming to fruition.

The truth is, these cuts in Medicare Advantage will force many seniors to pay higher premiums and further undermine their existing health care arrangements. You remember the President said: If you like what you have, you can keep it. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor.

We are now learning that is absolutely not true in many cases. Just to give you a sense, though, of Medicare Advantage's popularity, according to the Wall Street Journal, about one of two people newly eligible for Medicare chose Medicare Advantage and enrollment is growing at a rate of roughly 10 percent per year.

Why is Medicare Advantage so popular compared to traditional Medicare fee for service? Well, for all the reasons you might expect. The program offers a lot more flexibility and much more patient choice than traditional Medicare based on a number of different performance measures that also deliver better results than traditional Medicare. It has become the primary driver of innovation within the Medicare system.

Yet we know, and we have known now for 4 years, and we are now seeing that the reality is the administration is trying to undermine Medicare Advantage to help pay for ObamaCare. Neither one is working the way the beneficiaries of those programs expected and were promised they would work.

Earlier this month I joined with 39 of my colleagues here in the Senate to send a letter to CMS Administrator Marilyn Tavenner urging her to ''maintain payment levels that will allow Medicare Advantage beneficiaries to be protected from disruptive changes in 2015.'' Our letter described Medicare Advantage as ''a great success,'' noting that one study published in the American Journal of Managed Care found that ''the hospital readmission rates for [Medicare Advantage] enrollees are 13–20 percent lower than for Medicare [fee-for-service] enrollees.''

In other words, it is more effective delivering quality care, keeping seniors healthy and reducing dramatically the need to have them readmitted to hospitals once they are discharged.

The Members who signed this letter were not just folks who work on this side of the aisle. They included several prominent Democrats, such as my two colleagues from New York, the senior Senator from Minnesota, the junior Senator from Massachusetts, the junior Senator from Oregon, and from Washington State, and from Colorado, who also happens to be the Chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee.

They signed this letter—39 Senators—saying: Please do not cut Medicare Advantage in a way that disadvantages current seniors. It is bad enough that ObamaCare is effectively taking money out of a successful program, Medicare Advantage, to fund a new entitlement. It is bad enough that seniors are being forced to pay higher premiums and deal with enormous uncertainty in order to facilitate a government takeover of the health care system.

What makes it even worse is that ObamaCare continues to be an unmitigated disaster. Every day you pick up the newspaper, every day you watch television: Millions of Americans have lost their preferred health insurance, and millions more are paying higher premiums for coverage. Many families have discovered that their new ObamaCare-mandated coverage does not give their children access to their preferred doctors and hospitals.

As one physician from Washington State recently told CBS News:

> We're seeing denials of care, disruptions in care; we're seeing a great deal of confusion and, at times, anger and frustration on the part of these families who bought insurance thinking that their children were going to be covered. And they've in fact found that it's a false promise.

A false promise—that is ObamaCare in a nutshell, if you think about it. A program that was sold as a way to help the uninsured and the economy has instead hurt the economy and forced millions of Americans to lose their existing coverage—a false promise.

The Congressional Budget Office—the latest bit of bad news—now estimates that ObamaCare will reduce the size of the American labor force by 2.5 million full-time workers over the next decade. Here is the latest news. In addition, CMS has projected the law could lead to higher insurance premiums for about 11 million employees at small businesses.

As for the promise of ''universal coverage''—do you remember, this was the whole basis for government-mandated health care: Everybody is going to be covered. Well, when all is said and done, ObamaCare will, according to the Congressional Budget Office, leave upwards of 30 million people without health care coverage in 2023.

After witnessing a tidal wave of disruptions and hardships caused by his signature legislative accomplishments, what is President Obama's response? His response is to either minimize the political damage, to kick the news past the November election, to delay the employer mandates, to refuse to enforce other provisions of the law, and to waive the law which has no clear means for waiver. So basically, it is to refuse to enforce the law, to get it past the election. Let's cut the bleeding, politically speaking.

Earlier this month, for the second time since July, the administration announced they would unilaterally delay enforcement of the employer mandate. Of course, the President—like so much of what he does these days—has no clear legal authority to do that, but our colleagues across the aisle do not seem to care as long as they kick it past the election because they are worried about the accountability that comes with this false promise made to sell ObamaCare.

Americans want the same type of health care reforms that they wanted back in 2009. There are plenty of alternatives, sensible patient-centered reforms that will actually bring down the cost. You know, if you want people to buy more of something, you reduce the cost. You do not raise the cost. That creates just the opposite problem. We also know there are alternatives to expand quality insurance coverage and improve access to quality care.

I might just add—since I know the Senator from North Carolina has been patiently sitting there to speak on a different topic—that he and Senator HATCH and Senator COBURN have offered what has widely been heralded as a very sensible alternative approach to ObamaCare that avoids the problems and reduces the costs, and it does not interfere with patient choice.

We know ObamaCare promised these results, but it failed to deliver. In response, we have many different alternative ideas that increase patient choice, increase transparency, and increase provider competition, all of which is designed to produce for consumers lower cost, wider coverage, and better quality care.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, may I inquire how much time exists on both the majority and minority sides?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 21 minutes remaining on the Republican side, 9½ minutes remaining on the Democratic side.

Mr. BURR. I thank the Chair, and I thank my colleague for his comments on the Affordable Care Act.

I am actually excited to be here having a debate about veterans and about the promises we have made to those who are reliant on not only the VA but on this institution to actually look at the programs and the services provided, and when we, as a body, see deficiencies, reforming them, fixing them, so our customer—who is that person who made that ultimate sacrifice, who put on that uniform and, in many cases, now has a lifetime disability because of it—can count on that health care system to be there.

I would have expected we would be on the floor debating in a bipartisan way those fixes that were needed to make sure that veterans with disability claims didn't have to wait hundreds of days to determine whether they were going to have a disability that was signed off on and, if so, what the percentage was and that percentage then provided them income.

I thought we would focus on the challenges the Senate has to reform how the appeals process works. Because when a veteran is denied a disability claim or he gets less than he thinks he should have been awarded, then he has the opportunity to appeal that to the court of appeals. The time now for the appeals decision has grown to years. It shouldn't be like this. It is absurd that the Congress of the United States, much less the Veterans' Administration, is content with the deficiencies we have in this broken system.

Instead of being here to look at fixes provided under the Sanders bill, we are here looking at how to expand the population of coverage. We are here on programs that have had little to no hearings. We are here without understanding the intended or the unintended consequences.

Let me share the knowledge I have of North Carolina where we have the largest growing veterans population in America. I don't have the facilities today to handle that veterans population in the timeframe Americans are used to being delivered health care. I could go out and start construction tomorrow, if my good friend the Presiding Officer would allocate me the money, since he sits on the Appropriations Committee, and build facilities, and I still couldn't meet the facilities requirement needed to provide that level of care. As a matter of fact, we have about $14 billion worth of construction currently underway in the country, and on an annual basis, this body—the Congress of the United States—allocates about $1 billion in facilities construction and maintenance money.

We have 14 years of backlog right now and we are not even anticipating what the effects are going to be of our current warriors who have come out of Iraq, who will leave Afghanistan, who might enter Syria or who might be in a conflict down the road. No, we are here debating in the Sanders bill a massive expansion in who is provided benefits in the VA.

So who is that? It is veterans who have no service-connected disability. It is veterans who are above the means-testing threshold. Let me put that in layman's terms. These are not people who are low income and these are not people who have a service-connected disability.

We are going to have days to debate this bill, and I will introduce an alternative. I will openly confess, upfront, that I don't get into fixes, because to do fixes there has to be bipartisanship. To reform programs in the Federal

agencies, Republicans and Democrats have to come together.

We are here today because there was no outreach to attempt to put together a compromise bill. If the conversation we had about a day before we left a week ago, where my colleague said, this is what I am going to do, why don't you sign on, but he wasn't willing to talk about changes—if that was compromise, then he did that. But I don't consider that to be compromise. I don't consider it to be good-faith negotiation.

But that is behind us. We now have this bill to consider, and it is a massive expansion. And what does it do? It basically says to those warriors who have service-connected disabilities, those individuals who are low income—and this is where they get their service, their health care—you are going to have to wait in a bigger line. You are going to have to get behind more people. So what veterans expect, which is that the most needy will receive the services they need, is not what this bill does. It is not at all what it does.

As a matter of fact, section 301 of the Sanders bill would expand eligibility of the VA health care system. It would qualify to enroll in the VA health care as priority 8 veterans if they do not have access to health insurance except through a health exchange and do not qualify for higher priority.

Before getting into my concerns about this affected section and what impact it would have on VA, I wish to comment on how this section has been drafted. The section says:

> If a veteran qualifies as a priority 8 veteran and has no other option but the health exchange under the Affordable Care Act, they could enroll in the VA.

Let me read that again:

> If a veteran qualifies as a priority 8 veteran and has no other option but the health exchange under the Affordable Care Act, they can enroll in the VA.

We have just mandated that everybody in this country—except when the President delays the mandate—has to be under the Affordable Care Act and they are part of the health exchange. Here we are saying to priority 8 veterans, if your only option is the health exchange, we will let you opt into the VA. Well, if the health exchange is that good, why would we dare risk all other veterans who have service-connected disabilities or low incomes having to wait behind people who were provided health care out of the health exchange?

Some priority 8 veterans may even qualify for a subsidy under the exchange, something they would not receive if they were to enroll in VA health care. I don't know, are they concerned these veterans will be unable to find a plan that meets their needs? Everybody else in America was shoved into it. Why should we be concerned about them?

My intention today isn't to open a health care debate. I do have serious concerns about this expansion. Expanding eligibility could stress an already overburdened system. There is a reason why the priority 8 veterans program was halted. The VA found they could not provide timely access to services while sustaining a high level of care. And judging by the well over 30 health care inspectors reports issued by the Office of Inspector General in this Congress alone, the VA is having trouble with the limited group they currently serve.

Here are some examples of the IG's health care inspections report released since January 2013: 1. Three deaths in Atlanta because of delays in mental health care; 2. Two reports regarding delays in GI consults and issues with facilities operating services in Columbia, SC; 3. Emergency department patient death at the Memphis VA center; 4. Two reports on the inappropriate use of insulin pens at both the VA Western New York Healthcare System and the Salisbury VA Medical Center; and 5. Two reports on Legionnaires' disease at VA Pittsburgh and a review of Legionnaires' disease prevention at VHA facilities.

If we expand enrollment, if we expand the coverage, it would surely require an increase in funding at the VA. When we increase the number of patients entering the system, we certainly need to hire additional staff and to provide more space to treat the new veterans. I have already talked about the 14-year backlog we have on facilities now. Without followthrough on secondary cost, we only frustrate veterans when their expectations aren't met, not satisfy them.

I truly believe if we expand government programs we need to do it responsibly. We need to understand the intended consequences and plan for the unintended consequences. We should explore whether the VA can manage the implementation of this expansion. We should explore what impact this will have on the VA's ability to treat combat veterans and veterans with limited incomes and find out what new needs, both in staffing and space, would be created by this expansion.

Unfortunately, we don't know the answers to these questions, because in preparation for this section the majority didn't hold an oversight hearing looking specifically at the consequences—intended or unintended—to expand enrollment of priority 8 veterans. In fact, the only hearing on this subject was a hearing on legislation pending before the committee on October 30, 2013. At that hearing we heard testimony on three dozen bills—clearly, not enough time to examine the details of any of the 30 bills.

From their testimony at the hearing, the VA obviously agrees with me. Dr. Robert Jessie, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health, indicated that expanding enrollment of priority 8 veterans ''presents many potential complications and uncertain effects on VA's enrollment system.'' That comes from a guy pretty high up within the Veterans' Administration. They are not necessarily for this.

Finally, I want to address a comment my colleague from Vermont made at a press conference a few weeks ago. He said:

> We're not going to bring one new person in without making absolutely certain that the VA has the resources to accommodate those people.

As I read the bill, there is nothing in this provision or in the bill itself that would restrict implementation in that way. However, I would gladly support an amendment which would delay this provision until GAO reports that the VA could manage this additional population of veterans.

Mr. President, you might be thinking, as others who are listening might, what does all this cost? How is it paid for? Is the funding recurring or is it one-time funding? Is it permanent expansion?

Let me try to answer some of that for you. The way the Sanders bill is paid for is with money out of the overseas contingency operations. That is more money we were going to spend that we haven't spent, that we never had because we were borrowing it, and now we are going to use it to expand this. It is one-time funding for a permanent program. Let me say that again. It is one-time funding for a permanent program.

It is not as though we are going to fund this expansion of priority 8s, and all of a sudden, when OCO money is gone, we say: Oops, we didn't mean it; we are going to pull it back. No, these are going to be in the system regardless of the impact, regardless of the consequences.

So who is adversely affected? Today's warriors. The same warriors who are waiting in line to get health care services are now going to compete for a limited number of slots to be seen by people who might have had private insurance, by people who might have been in the health care exchange, by individuals who are not low income and who have no service-connected disability. Who else? Those veterans with disability claims who are waiting for a determination. I mean these veterans are going to be impacted by this because we will have such an influx of people within the system. Veterans are waiting for disposition of their disability claims, their appeals. Those who have gone back and have waited, they have finally gone through hundreds of days for a claim to be determined only to find out they have to appeal it. Now they are going to go through hundreds of days of appeal, and we are saying we are going to have to start using some of these people to administer new services which far exceed and are outside of priority 8 which I focused on. But we will talk about the entirety of this bill as the next several days go on.

The last one, and I will stop for this afternoon: Who is adversely affected? Our kids, our grandchildren, the ones who sit at home today hoping the decisions we make about future obligations

take into account that they are paying the tab. They are the ones who will be here years from now keeping the promises we make, and they are hoping we only make the ones we can keep.

Mr. President, how much time is remaining on our side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Five minutes.

Mr. BURR. I will tell a personal story about a trip to one of our military cemeteries abroad.

We were in the country of Belgium. I was there for a Memorial Day service. Much to my amazement, there were probably 4,000 to 5,000 individuals.

We got through with the formalities of a very well-constructed Memorial Day celebration. As I wandered through the graves, I found a Belgium couple with their two young children at the headstone of an American soldier from World War II. I asked them one simple question: Why are you here?

The Belgium father, younger than I, looked at me and he said: Sir, I inherited this grave from my father. My father took the responsibility for this grave to always make sure it was just like it was the day he got it. I have now inherited that from my father, and my children will inherit that responsibility from me.

I know there are a lot of veterans organizations who hope Senator SANDERS' bill becomes law, but I think there are a lot of veterans who are hoping it doesn't: the veterans who need the VA system and count on it for their mental health treatment, for their substance abuse treatment, for their primary care. They count on it for diabetes maintenance, they count on it to stay alive, and we promised it to them.

I am sure future generations will look at the decisions we make this week and will belly up to the bar for whatever it costs, but I think it is important for us to remember our obligations stretch long past our service here. Although it seems somewhat easy to spend somebody else's money, our kids want us to reform this, our veterans want us to reform this, the VA wants us to reform this.

Once we reform it, we can talk about expansion. Until then, it is irresponsible for the Congress of the United States—for the Senate of the United States—to talk about dumping more people into a broken system, to ask those who have already waited so long to wait longer because of our actions.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. I thank my colleague from North Carolina, the ranking member of the Veterans' Committee, for his remarks. I look forward to debating some of the issues the Senator raised because I think it is important for not just the veterans of this country but the tens of millions of people who support our veterans to understand what we are trying to do to improve lives for those people who have put their lives on the line to defend this country.

I did find it interesting that the ranking member from North Carolina suggested in so many words, yes, this bill does have the support of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Military Officers Association of America, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Gold Star Wives of America, and dozens of other veterans organizations, but the implication was they may be supporting this bill but veterans back home do not. I doubt that very much. In fact, I happen to believe these organizations do a very good job in representing the interests of their veterans and that they listen to the veterans.

As the ranking member understands, this bill was put together not from my head, not from his head or any Member of the Senate's head. We listened to the veterans community which came forward before the Congress. In fact, today there was a joint session—which I had to miss because I was here—with the DAV, and then we are going to hear from the American Legion, from the VFW—we are going to hear from all the veterans organizations.

This bill represents what those veterans organizations said the veterans community needs. I strongly disagree with the Senator from North Carolina in suggesting the veterans organizations do not do an effective job in representing their membership.

The other point I will make is that I look forward to this debate. Every now and then it is a good idea to have a debate on real issues on the floor of the Senate, so I look forward to this debate. But in terms of the suggestion that this is not a bipartisan bill—I do understand absolutely not every word in here nor every source of funding is supported by our Republican colleagues, but as chairman of the Veterans' Committee, I have worked as hard as I could—and I believe the ranking member knows this—to develop as best I could a bipartisan piece of legislation. I remind all the Members of the Senate and the American people this legislation contains a significant number of provisions authored and supported by Republican members of the Veterans' Committee, including my friend from North Carolina. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, there are some 26 separate provisions which Republican Members have authored or cosponsored. That is not an insignificant number.

Further, perhaps two of the most prominent provisions are the omnibus bills. That is when we collect the number of different bills and we put them into one pot. We did that on two occasions. As the ranking member knows, the vote on each of those omnibus bills was unanimous. Every Democrat, every Republican, and the Independent chairman of the committee voted for them. In truth, other important provisions were passed—not unanimously, of course, but they did pass in many cases with bipartisan support.

Furthermore, this bill contains two key bipartisan provisions passed overwhelmingly by the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

So let me acknowledge that not every provision in this bill was brought before the committee. That is true. But the two major provisions which were not brought before this committee are bipartisan and in fact have been passed overwhelmingly by the Republican-controlled House.

With almost unanimous votes, the House passed the same provision included in the Senate bill which would solve a longstanding problem to authorize the VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases in 18 States and Puerto Rico.

My friend talks about the fact that we need more infrastructure for our veterans. He is right. This bill provides 27 major medical facility leases in 18 States and Puerto Rico, and in an absolutely overwhelmingly bipartisan vote that language was passed in the House.

The second bill—not included in our discussions in the Senate committee—also passed with very broad support in the House—deals with ensuring that veterans can take full advantage of the post-9/11 GI bill and get instate tuition in the State in which they currently live. If I am not mistaken, I believe my friend supports that provision.

It is fair to say not every provision was debated in the committee. He is right. But the two major provisions that were not, were passed with overwhelming support in the House and I believe will pass with overwhelming support in this body and are included in this legislation.

I believe virtually every Member of the Senate, regardless of his or her ideology, cares about veterans—and I know the Senator from North Carolina does—and all of us want to do the very best we can. That is why I have worked so hard with Members of my committee, with Republicans and Democrats, to make this bill as bipartisan as it possibly could be. I am not here to say it is 100 percent bipartisan. It is not. But we worked hard, and there are significant and major provisions in this bill which come from my Republican colleagues because they were good ideas. As chairman of the committee, my view is we don't reject an idea because somebody has an ''R'' next to their name. If they have a good idea, it is in the bill.

May I ask the President how much time remains.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 2½ minutes.

Mr. SANDERS. I will very briefly touch on some of the other provisions in the bill.

We restore full COLA for military retirees. As we all know, the House and the Senate passed and the President signed the bill to undo the provision in the Budget Act, but they did not include those members of the military

who signed up after January 2014. They are still suffering from a cut in the COLA. We address that.

This bill does expand VA health care and among other ways it provides dental care. I don't know about other States, but in my State—and I suspect all over this country—in talking to veterans, they think dental care is part of health care. Right now, except for service-connected situations, dental care is not provided. We have a major pilot project to say to veterans: Yes, dental care is part of VA health care and you can get that.

As to advanced appropriations for the VA, not everybody knows this, but we were 7 to 10 days away from disabled veterans not getting their checks when the government was shut down. This legislation ensures veterans receive consistent access to the benefits they have earned by establishing advanced appropriations for the mandatory accounts at VA.

We move forward in a bipartisan way to end the benefits backlog. My colleague from North Carolina pointed out it is a serious issue. Everybody agrees it is a serious issue. I think the VA is making some progress. This legislation has significant language to help the VA move forward in that area.

This legislation would extend from 5 years to 10 years unfettered access to VA health care for recently separated veterans to address their health care needs early.

This legislation renews our vow to hire veterans, making sure veterans get the employment opportunities many are now lacking when they come back from Iraq and Afghanistan.

This legislation deals in a significant way with the horrendous issue of sexual assault, making sure victims of sexual assault—women and men—get the care they need at the VA.

I will conclude by saying this is a serious bill which deals with a very serious issue. My hope is every Member treats the needs of veterans with the respect they deserve. I look forward to the debate which I am confident we will have.

Clearly, this is not a perfect bill, and I know there are Members who have ideas as to how they can improve it. This is what the legislative process is about. My sincere hope, however, is amendments which are brought forth deal with veterans issues and not amendments which are not relevant and not germane to this discussion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SANDERS. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 30 seconds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SANDERS. The ranking member and I have disagreements, and that is what the legislative process is about. Let's debate the issues on the floor.

I hope we show our respect to the veterans by not getting into issues that have nothing to do with veterans' needs. I hope we are not off debating Iran or ObamaCare or gay marriage or whatever it may be. I guess those are good political issues for some people. I hope people understand how significant and important the issue itself is—the needs of our veterans—and we stay focused on that issue as we bring forth amendments.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, the chairman of the committee. He is right when he said we have a lot of agreements. As a matter of fact, about 80 percent of the policies in his bill are in my alternative bill, but I have a big problem with the other 20 percent. I have a problem with the cost. I have a problem with the unintended consequences. I wish we could figure out the intended consequences, but we cannot because there has not been much time to do it.

I look forward to the next several days. I believe the chairman made a plea that the amendments be limited to VA issues. That might be possible if the minority had the opportunity to amend legislation in this institution. I think we have had four votes on Republican amendments since July. To suggest that Iran is not important is, in fact, turning a blind eye on the world.

In my bill I have a piece of legislation that is cosponsored by 59 Senators, and it is bipartisan. My legislation is the Iran sanctions bill. Why? Because it is the only way we can get this to the floor. We have been denied the opportunity to deal with this issue in any other way. This is important to the American people, and it is important to our friends and allies around the world. I am sure it will dominate part of the debate.

Make no mistake about it, the one matter the chairman didn't point to was what we are fixing. We are adding a lot of stuff, but we are not fixing anything. Ask any veteran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask for an additional 30 seconds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURR. If you ask any veteran about the areas that need reform, I believe they would tell Chairman SANDERS, just like they would tell me: Yes, there are a lot of places that need reform. To suggest that should not be part of this debate is ludicrous.

I look forward to the next several days, and I urge my colleagues to support getting on this bill and to vote yea when they come to the floor for this next vote.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 301, S. 1982, the Comprehensive Veterans Health Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act.

Harry Reid, Bernard Sanders, Tom Harkin, Brian Schatz, Mary L. Landrieu, Jack Reed, Jeanne Shaheen, Tim Kaine, Christopher A. Coons, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Joe Donnelly, Jon Tester, Barbara Boxer, Richard Blumenthal, Sherrod Brown, Barbara Mikulski.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived. The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 1982, a bill to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Florida (Mr. NELSON) is necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 99, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 44 Leg.]

YEAS—99

Alexander	Franken	Moran
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Graham	Murphy
Barrasso	Grassley	Murray
Begich	Hagan	Paul
Bennet	Harkin	Portman
Blumenthal	Hatch	Pryor
Blunt	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Heitkamp	Reid
Boozman	Heller	Risch
Boxer	Hirono	Roberts
Brown	Hoeven	Rockefeller
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Cantwell	Isakson	Sanders
Cardin	Johanns	Schatz
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Chambliss	Kaine	Sessions
Coats	King	Shaheen
Coburn	Kirk	Shelby
Cochran	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Landrieu	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Thune
Corker	Lee	Toomey
Cornyn	Levin	Udall (CO)
Crapo	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Cruz	Markey	Vitter
Donnelly	McCain	Walsh
Durbin	McCaskill	Warner
Enzi	McConnell	Warren
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse
Fischer	Merkley	Wicker
Flake	Mikulski	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Nelson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 99, the nays are 0. Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I would like to spend a little bit of time offering a viewpoint different from the viewpoint of the chairman of the committee on this bill.

First of all, I want to say by context that my father and his two brothers all served in World War II. My two brothers served during the Vietnam era.

There is no question we have an obligation to meet our commitments to those who have put their lives and futures on the line for this country.

But it pains me that, although we have increased spending 58 percent in the VA programs since 2009, which was fiscal year 2010, what we have seen is a complete lack of oversight of what is happening. Let my give an example. The VA Committee in the Senate last year held 30 hearings, 4 of which were oversight. If you read the transcripts of those hearings, you cannot call them oversight hearings even though they were billed as oversight hearings.

Why is that important? It is important because there are a multitude of significant, serious problems in the Veterans' Administration. Just 2 days ago it was discovered that in an L.A. VA clinic, the staff of the clinic destroyed the medical records of thousands of people so that when they do the metric on how far behind they are, we cannot measure it; or the fact that 82 veterans last year died of carcinomas through delayed diagnosis because they could not get a diagnostic procedure, such as a colonoscopy; or the fact that we have all these veterans who cannot access mental health care, and we see the suicide rate—unacceptable, to say the least.

So we have a bill on the floor that massively—and that is a small word for what this bill does—massively expands the authority and the ability of the VA to offer care to another 14 million veterans—from 6 million to 20 million.

On a system today that cannot keep up, we have 600,000 people waiting for a disability determination. We are not having oversight hearings on that. We are not having oversight hearings on a South Carolina VA hospital where people are dying from malpractice like crazy. We are not having the oversight hearings to hold the VA accountable. What we are doing is putting a bill to expand their responsibilities instead of holding them accountable for the responsibilities they have today. That is what we should be doing. Instead, we are going to add $60 billion. And that is a conservative number. That is my number.

But all you have to do is look at what the cost and the efficiency and the outcomes are through the VA system to see that we are going to diminish the veterans caregiver program by expanding it to everybody. We are going to create all sorts of new programs and no resources to actually provide them. And we are going to create more advanced funding, advanced appropriations, which will limit our ability to hold them capable and culpable in the future.

There are a lot of things we ought to be doing for our veterans right now that are already in law that we are not doing, and we come to the floor with a massive expansion at a time when we cannot even care for what we are doing. As a physician who trained in VA hospitals, I know the difference in the level of care. I can assure you it has not gotten any better. From my colleagues I speak to in the medical profession and from the veterans whom I talk to who contact me, it has gotten far worse. It does not have to be that way, but it will always be that way if, in fact, we continue to not hold those in leadership positions accountable for not stepping to the bar for performance, quality, and outcome.

From Congress to the Pentagon, we must reassess what laws, regulations, and rules can be changed to ensure that benefits and other decisions the Veterans' Administration makes are beyond reproach and based on the best facts available. Let's ensure that the Department's limited resources are focused on its core mission rather than disbursed in an effort to remedy every possible problem for every veteran. Remember, when everyone is first priority, no one is. That is what this bill is. We diminish the priority of the commitments we have made to the veterans who are out there today.

Our veterans are looking to us for help. We are about to enact legislation that is going to further strain the ability of the VA to do its most basic charge: help with the health care, mental health, and capability of those who have put it all on the line for this country.

It is shameful that Congress now is trying to claim credit for providing new benefits while our old promises are forgotten. Our heroes—our heroes—are literally dying at the hands of malpractice, incompetency, and delay.

If we really wanted to care for our veterans—those with service-connected disabilities—what we would say is, go wherever you want to go to get whatever you need because you served this country. And it actually would cost less. But because we pile them into a broken system now—and that is not all VA organizations. Let me clarify that. There are some excellent VA hospitals that do great work. Their specialists are far ahead of the private sector. But on general grounds, to put a veteran at a place with less than the best possible care dishonors their service to this country—dishonors their service to our country.

Veterans are our heroes. They are the symbol of our country of sacrifice, of giving for others. Yet we have four oversight hearings in a year? With the multitude of problems that are going on in the VA hospitals and the Veterans' Administration in terms of disability determination, we have four? The House had 34 oversight hearings, and they were rigorous. When you ask members of the committee: Have you read the House oversight hearings? No. They had 26 regular hearings and 34 oversight hearings trying to hold the VA accountable.

We are not going to hold the VA accountable with this bill. We are going to make them less accountable. And that is a disservice to the very people who have honored us by serving in the military of this country.

As of February 15, 2014, the VA has 677,000 claims pending for disability compensation. Why should it take a year for somebody who put their butt on the line for this country and received an injury and is disabled? Why should it take a year for us to determine that we owe them an extra bit of compensation and availability?

What is being done to fix that? We have a VA regional center in my home town, with good employees, hard-working employees. They are not destroying files so they can say they met a metric. Veterans seeking mental health treatment still experience weeks-long delays scheduling appointments. The epidemic of overprescription of opiates—let me say that again—there is an epidemic of overprescription of opiates for those people who served our country, making them dependent addicts because we give them the wrong treatments.

There are avoidable veterans deaths at the VA. In a recent story by CNN on misdiagnosis and improper care for gastrointestinal conditions, there were 2-year consultation delays—2 years to get in to see a specialist at the VA when you are losing blood. How do we explain that? Who is accountable? We are, because we are not holding them accountable.

There were 82 deaths last year alone—I am sure that is a far understatement—because of delayed diagnosis for just investigative endoscopies. That is just what is documented. How do we accept that? Had they been in the private sector, they would not have had a delay. They would not be dead.

So here is the proposal that I would put out. Do our veterans deserve the best of care in this country? I think they do. Should they be able to get that care where they know the quality, they know the outcomes and the transparency as to what their future might be or must they be forced into a system that is going to give them something less? That is where we are today.

The chairman in his bill increases VA medical care for everybody who served without a disability. What will that do to the VA system? We cannot handle what we have in front of us now in terms of those who have a percentage medical disability that allows them access to the VA health care system.

So when you triple that or more than triple it, where are the resources? If we really mean what we say in this bill, you are talking hundreds of billions of dollars over 10 years. You are not talking the $30 billion that the chairman says is what the cost is. You are talking hundreds of billions. But the point I would make is we have an infrastructure out there that can care for our veterans. It is the hospitals all around the country. It is the doctors all around the country. Does a veteran not have the right to get the best care? Should we not give him a card and say: You served this country. Here is your

service connection. Here is your disability. You can get care at a VA hospital, if you want, or you can get care wherever you want.

But I will guarantee you what will happen is, if we give what was promised to the veterans—not what we are giving today—real care, real opportunity with real transparency as the outcome, what you will see is marked improvement in care, marked improvement in outcomes, no change in additional cost—no change in additional cost—and access that is promised but not denied and delayed.

In one South Carolina VA facility alone, 20 veterans are either dead or dying of cancer because of delayed diagnoses. They had the symptoms and presented them to the hospital, but because of delay and incompetency—just that one hospital.

The other thing we know is veterans' malpractice claims are markedly increasing—markedly. All you have to do is look at the OIG report on the claims of deficiencies at the VA in New Haven, CT. Contamination, cross-contamination, inadequate procedures for infection precautions, absence of employees that are supposed to be on duty when they are not, failure to clean operating rooms properly, failure to have the proper ventilation system in an operating room for a contaminated case. That is just one hospital.

What does that mean in real life? What that means in real life is the risk for iatrogenic or facility or physician-caused infection goes through the roof—not the fault of the physician but the fault of the VA for not managing the system properly.

Former VA epidemiologist, Dr. Steven Coughlin, testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee that the VA failed to follow up on over 2,000 veterans who indicated in VA surveys that they were experiencing suicidal thoughts. When the HVAC followed up on Dr. Coughlin's claims, they found that they were validated. Unfortunately, too many of those who had suggested their problems committed suicide. It is a little late.

Because Dr. Coughlin brought this up, he was admonished, bullied, and intimidated for speaking about the ethical lapses at the VA. Where is the oversight hearing? You see, if we are not going to hold the VA accountable, the quality of care is not going to rise to the level that our veterans deserve.

Another area is this. The VA wasted $3 billion over the past 10 years because they failed to secure competitive market prices for surgical implants. That is $3 billion. That is documented. That is a GAO study. GAO did that. We did not do it. We did not find it. Oh, by the way, at the end of the year when they had some money to spend, about $600,000 worth of artwork was purchased, instead of putting it into additional doctors, cleaning operating rooms, additional people to secure clearances on disability.

By expanding VA care and the potential of 22 million more veterans, you can guarantee that the veterans who are getting care now are going to get poorer quality and less access to care. You can guarantee that. That is what this bill is really about. This bill is really about a decrease in the requirements for care for our veterans. It is not about an increase. It is about a decrease because when you flood that system with people who do not have a service-connected disability, what will happen is this. Easy goes first and hard goes last. I have seen that in the VA my whole life.

There is also an expansion in the caregivers program. I am not sure I disagree with it. But certainly, for those after 9/11 a commitment ought to not be diminished if we expand this program. The minimum cost for that is $9.5 billion. The VA has not yet met its full obligation under the VA caregivers law that we have today. Yet we are not holding them accountable.

There is another area in this bill that I think is tragic. It is well intended, but it mandates that the University of West Virginia or the University of Oklahoma must give in-State tuition to anybody from anywhere that has ever served or they lose their benefits under the GI bill. That totally ignores the Constitution in this country.

Now, 20 States have already said they are doing that. Ten others have bills in the process. Eight others have a partial. So we are at 38 of the 50 States right now. But in our vision, we are going to mandate that the Tenth Amendment does not mean anything, that the 80 percent of funding on higher education in Oklahoma that comes from people in the State of Oklahoma, that we can co-opt that and coerce them and tell them what they are going to do.

It is well intended. But it is certainly not constitutional. It certainly does not respect the Tenth Amendment of the United States. Does Oklahoma or West Virginia have the right to make a decision on who they give in-State tuition to? Why not just pass a law that says: Every State will give in-State tuition to everybody.

The reason it was connected with States is because of State funding. We totally trample that. Again, the advanced appropriations will limit our ability to hold those people accountable for the very things that I have described to you. But we are going to do it anyway.

A proposal to expand VA advanced appropriations needs to be considered by the administration as a part of an across-the-government review of the advantages and disadvantages of such progress, not only for the VA but potentially other programs and agencies. Only in the context of such a broad review could the administration offer an opinion on making such a change for the VA. Therefore, we cannot offer a position.

That is from the VA. The real answer is: Give us advanced appropriations, and then it is only after the fact that you can hold us accountable, not during the fact.

Here is another GAO study that we should be highly concerned about. The VA—this is the GAO—has no idea how long most patients wait to receive care. They do not even know their own metrics.

It is unclear how long veterans are waiting to receive care in VA's medical facilities because the reported data are unreliable, because VA hospitals have tried to cover up wait times, fudge numbers, and backdate delayed appointments in an effort to make things better than they are.

That is directly from a GAO report. Where is the oversight hearing on that; or the L.A. facility that just destroyed medical records so nobody could know how long people had been waiting for appointments?

Based on GAO recommendations to improve reliability of reported wait times for new medical appointments in 2013, the VA changed the way it tracks and calculates its performances. Using the new tracking method in 2013, the VA reported only 41 percent of veterans were scheduled for a new primary care appointment and only 40 percent of veterans were scheduled for a new specialty appointment within the 14-day standard.

So 40 percent of the time, with the 6 million veterans we have now, they are getting adequate timely care, and 60 percent are not. Yet we are going to expand that to 22 million, and we don't have the resource base or the facility base or the employee base or the professional base or the caregiver base to do that?

In contrast, in 2012 the VA reported that 90 percent of new primary appointments and 95 percent of specialty appointments had met the 14-day standard.

The VA exam requests backlog purge. VA employees destroyed veterans' medical records to cancel backlog exam requests.

That is from Patrick Howley, again.

Oliver Mitchell, a marine veteran and former patient services assistant at the Los Angeles VA system, told the Daily Caller: We just didn't have the resources to conduct all those exams. Basically we would get 3,000 requests a month for medical exams, but in a 30-day period we only had the resources to do about 800. That is 25 a day. That rolls over to the next month and creates a backlog. It is a numbers thing. The waiting list counts against the hospital's efficiency. The longer a veteran waits for an exam, it counts against the hospital as far as productivity is concerned. Some patients were waiting 6 to 9 months for an exam, and the VA didn't know how to address the issue.

Is the answer to open this to another 16 million veterans or is the answer to improve the efficiency, transparency, quality, and outcomes of the present VA system before we go about expanding this system to people who are otherwise covered?

Mr. Mitchell, when he tried to sound the alarm on the VA's deliberate attempt to fraudulently reduce the backlog, was transferred out of his department and eventually terminated from

his job. After he contacted Congress in 2011—2 months later when the VA found out about it—he was fired.

So do we really want transparency in what we are doing? Do we really want to know what is going on? Do we really want to fix the system? Do we really want to offer health care to veterans and make it equal to what they can get in the private sector or do we want to say we want to offer all these new benefits at the same time we are not meeting our commitment on the benefits we have already promised? That is the game that is being played.

Earlier I said the VA said the Committee on Veterans Affairs held 30 hearings. They only held 16—16 hearings; 1 every 3 weeks.

The annual budget of the Department of Veterans Affairs exceeded $134 billion a year. Delay in vet care is not for the lack of money. The delay in vet care is not for the lack of money, it is for the lack of accountability in management. Case in point: More than 20 veterans have died or are dying due to late diagnosis and treatment of cancer at the William Jennings Bryan Dorn Veterans Medical Center in Columbia, SC. Documents show only one-third of that $1 million appropriated by Congress to fix the problem was used for its intended purpose at that VA facility. Only one-third of the money we appropriated to fix this problem was actually used to pay for care for veterans on waiting lists. At the same time, the documents show the waiting list at Dorn kept growing to 3,800 patients in December of 2011.

I will be back to speak on the floor and offer amendments. I have pages and pages of examples of veterans who served this country honorably, proudly, and sacrificed to a great extent, who are getting substandard care in the system we are offering them today. Before we expand that system, what is needed is a rigorous oversight and debate about how we are doing what we are doing now.

The promise of access to care for our veterans, as shown by VA centers and clinics all across this country, hospitals all across this country, diagnostic procedures all across this country, reflects that when access is delayed, that care is denied. And that is what is happening right now far too often to the people who have served this country. We ought to be about fixing that and holding accountable those in the responsible positions, and holding ourselves accountable to do what is necessary to give at least the standard of care they could get anywhere else in the country. That is the direction in which we should go.

I thank the Presiding Officer for the time, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I look forward to discussing in the next several days the issues Senator COBURN raised, but I did want to make one clarification, and I hope the Senator is listening. He repeatedly indicated this legislation opens the door to every one of the 22 million veterans in America, and then proceeded to say that once you open the door, you are going to have inadequate care because we don't have the resources to take care of 22 million veterans. That simply is inaccurate and that is not in the legislation.

There is nothing in the legislation that says we open the door to every veteran in America regardless of income. So when people talk about the VA suddenly being flooded by veterans and care being diminished because of the huge increase into the system, that is just not true.

What is true? What is true right now is we have an absurd and complicated income eligibility system throughout this country. What happens in the State of Vermont or the State of California—one's eligibility for the VA, if you are a priority 8—is different and dependent upon the county in which you live. So in Vermont, you can be living in a county where if your income level is $45,000 a year you are eligible for VA health care, but in a county where the line is drawn just across the street, you may not be eligible. In States such as California or Georgia, which have many, many, many counties, you have the absurd situation where a person living on one side of the street is eligible for VA health care, but the person living on the other side of the street is not eligible for VA health care.

This is totally absurd, and we end up having hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of different income eligibility standards. So what this legislation does is not open the door—and I hope my Republican colleagues will not continue to say it because it is not true—but it does say that in a State where you have different income eligibility standards based on counties, what we will do is have one income eligibility standard per State, that being the highest level. So we will have 50 different standards—50 different standards for 50 different States—not have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of different standards. In every State there will be an income eligibility level, but it will not open the door for health care to 22 million veterans.

Second of all, we were very careful in this legislation to say, if a veteran who, under this bill, would be eligible for VA health care, a veteran who can newly access VA health care, we absolutely have to have the medical infrastructure available so that all veterans will get the quality care they need; so that new veterans coming in will not diminish service for other veterans. In this bill we make clear—and we made this clear in our long discussion with the Disabled American Veterans—the priority for the VA remains those veterans who are injured in action, those veterans who need that care. That is the highest priority that we establish.

So when people say we are opening the door to all veterans, care is going to be diminished, that simply is not true. That is not what the bill says.

Thirdly, let me reiterate some of the provisions in this bill, because before we vote on final passage—and, by the way, I want to take this opportunity to thank every Member of the Senate for voting to proceed. I think it is time we had some very serious debate about VA health care, and now is the time to do it. But let me reiterate a point I made earlier. Senator COBURN raised important issues, Senator BURR before him raised important issues, and we should debate those issues. But in all due respect for the veterans of this country, who have sacrificed so much, let us not politicize this debate on veterans issues by bringing in sanctions against Iran or let us not bring in ObamaCare, let us not bring in the dozens of other issues that are out there. Let us debate this issue on its merits. Let us bring forth amendments which deal with veterans issues.

Senator COBURN and Senator BURR have amendments which deal with veterans issues. I welcome those amendments. Let us have those debates. Nobody ever suggested this bill is perfect. There are a lot of Senators out there, Democrats and Republicans, who have ideas about how we can improve the services and the programs we provide to veterans. I welcome those ideas. But do not destroy this legislation by politicizing it, by doing what we have done month after month, year after year, which is why the American people have so much contempt for what goes on in Congress. Let us focus on veterans issues.

We have differences of opinion. Let us debate those issues. Let us not bring in extraneous matters, poison pills, which will give people a reason to vote against this bill. Let us debate veterans issues.

Let me talk about some of the issues in this bill that my Republican colleagues did not talk about. No. 1, I am proud—I hope we are all proud—that recently we made sure the promises made to military retirees were kept, that we rescinded the 1-percent COLA decrease that was in the bipartisan budget agreement. But we did not go far enough. Men and women who are joining the military after January 2014 are still subject to that decrease in COLA.

Are we in favor of keeping promises to all veterans, including the new members of the Armed Forces or are we not? Let us debate that issue. I believe that we keep our promises to all veterans. That is in the bill. If people want to oppose that, they have the right to oppose that.

We have heard in several instances that the VA does not have the medical infrastructure to take care of the needs of veterans, and that is true. That is why in this bill we authorize the VA to enter into 27 major medical facility leases in 18 States and in Puerto Rico—18 States and Puerto Rico.

So don't come forward and say ''gee, VA does not have the infrastructure to

take care of veterans needs'' but then vote against a provision that significantly expands VA health care capabilities. I talked a moment ago about what we mean by expanding VA health care. We do away with the absurdly complicated bureaucratic situation that now exists in which there are hundreds of different income eligibility standards in the 50 States of the country. We reduce it to 50. In California or Vermont, you will know whether you are eligible for health care as a Priority 8 veteran.

Does it open the opportunity for more veterans to come into VA health care? It does. The reason is because VA provides good-quality health care to our veterans, which is why the veterans throughout this country whom I have talked to and in patient satisfaction surveys approve and are supportive of VA health care. More want to come into the system.

We heard just how terrible and awful VA health care is, and then we heard: We don't want to open the doors because it is going to be flooded with new people coming into VA health care. You can't have it both ways. If VA health care is so terrible, why are you afraid of new people coming into VA health care? The answer is that if you go out to the veterans community, they will tell you: Yeah, there are problems in VA. But there are problems in every health care institution in this country. Over 30,000 Americans die every single year because they don't get to the doctor when they should because they don't have health care. I don't want any veterans to be part of that number.

Hospitals all over this country are struggling with an epidemic of infections. The VA has done better than many other medical institutions in addressing that.

In terms of telehealth—which is so important to veterans in my rural State and in rural States all over the country—guess which medical institution is leading the country in terms of telehealth. It is the Veterans' Administration. That means a veteran can walk into a VA community-based outreach clinic in rural West Virginia and have a teleconference with a specialist in any other part of the country. VA has been cutting-edge in terms of telehealth.

We talk about medical technology and medical health care records. Guess which health care institution in America has led the effort in terms of medical and health care technology. It has been the VA.

So I find it interesting that on one hand some of my colleagues tell us how terrible VA health care is, and on the other hand they are nervous that hundreds of thousands of veterans may want to access VA health care because, in fact, it is one of the best health care institutions in the country.

Does VA have problems? Of course it has problems. I am not aware of any health care institution in America that does not have its share of problems. The difference between the VA and many private or nonprofit hospitals is—and it should be this way—by law, every problem at the VA makes it to the front pages. My guess is that if a hospital in West Virginia or Vermont screws up, they don't necessarily make it to the front pages. Because VA is public and by law they have to be transparent, they are on the front pages.

In terms of advanced appropriations for VA, my friends on the other side have a bit of a problem with that. I don't. I find it interesting that when our Republican colleagues in the House shut down the U.S. Government because they don't like and wanted to defund ObamaCare, we were 7 days to 10 days away from preventing disabled veterans from getting the checks they need in order to survive. So I believe advanced funding for the VA to make sure that they are never put in that position again, that there is money in the bank to pay the benefits we owe to our veterans in the event of another government shutdown, is good public policy.

As I mentioned earlier, when we talk about health care, in my view, we have to talk about dental care as well. If people do not have adequate dental care, it impacts their employability, say if they are missing front teeth. People get sick from infections if they don't have adequate dental care. I think we owe it to our veterans to make sure they do.

This legislation provides a pilot project for 30,000 veterans to begin to access dental care within the VA. We will see how that pilot goes. I suspect we are going to see a huge need out there. And if some of my colleagues think veterans are not entitled to dental care, then we have a difference of opinion. That is fine. Let's debate it. But I think dental care is an intrinsic part of health care in general. I think we have a dental care crisis in the United States of America and within the dental community. Right now dental care is available to those veterans who have suffered service-connected dental problems but not available to veterans in general. I want to change that.

I have heard the discussion about the backlog. Every Member of the Senate is concerned about the backlog. We have had hearings in the Senate about the backlog. I am really glad that today people are concerned about the backlog. I just wonder where they were 5 years ago when—before Obama became President—the VA was probably the largest institution in this Nation, if not the world, that still did all of its benefits processing work on paper, not digitally.

When Secretary Shinseki became Secretary of the VA, he said: We are going to bring the VA into the 21st century. We are going to go from paper to digital, to an electronic system.

That is what they have been doing, and what we have seen is real progress. Is it fast enough for me? No, it is not. But Secretary Shinseki has told me personally and our committee that they are on track, so by the end of 2014 all VA claims will be processed within 120 days with 98 percent accuracy. That is pretty good. Just think for a moment what a huge task that is. Individual veteran files wider than this, with years and years of records, have to be put into a digital system. That is what they are doing, and they are making progress. In this legislation, we have brought forth Republican and Democrat ideas to make sure that they are, in fact, on target and that they reach the very ambitious goals Secretary Shinseki brought forth.

So if you are interested in the claims backlog, vote for this legislation because we have bipartisan language in it to make sure veterans do not have to wait years to get their claims processed.

My friend from Oklahoma said he is not sympathetic to the idea that veterans should pay instate tuition, which is essentially what we meant when we passed the post-9/11 GI educational bill. Every time we bring forth legislation, we hear all of the reasons why we should not go forward in providing services and benefits to our veterans.

I would argue—and many economists would agree with me—that one of the most significant pieces of legislation passed in the modern history of the United States of America was the GI bill of World War II. That bill said to the millions of people who fought in World War II, in that terrible war: When you come home, no matter what your income is, you will be eligible to get a higher education. As a result of that legislation, millions of soldiers who returned were able to go to college. They became businessmen, they became doctors, they became lawyers. And one of the reasons the economy of the United States of America expanded significantly for the middle class was a direct result of that very important GI bill.

What we said several years ago was that we should take that premise and apply it to the men and women who served post-9/11 in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was quite a political debate here. Some of my Republican friends had their doubts. We passed it, and today over 1 million veterans and their family members are now getting a college education. In my view, that was exactly the right thing to do.

One of the problems is that veterans move about. So if they go from the State where they have lived their whole life—for example, they lived in Vermont and go to California—and the GI bill promises them instate tuition, it turns out the tuition in the State they are in now may be a lot higher than in their home State and sometimes makes it impossible for them to go to college.

We agree with virtually all the veterans organizations that the intent of the post-9/11 GI education bill was to

make sure they get instate tuition. So if somebody from California comes to Vermont, they get our instate tuition. If somebody from Vermont goes to California, they get their instate tuition. Not doing so denies many people a higher education.

Previously, this Congress passed language which says that if you served in Iraq and Afghanistan, you are going to get 5 years of free health care, which was the right thing to do. It turns out not everybody learned about the benefit. Four or five years have come and gone. What we say to those veterans is, we are going to give you another 5 years to take advantage of that provision.

Senator MURRAY from Washington—the former chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee who preceded me—and Senator REID earlier today talked about the employment situation for veterans. I think we all know we are in a tough economy. Real unemployment is close to 13 percent. Youth unemployment is higher. So when somebody who gets out of the service and comes home to look for a job—it is hard to do.

I believe we have to do what we can to make sure that when people leave the service they can find a job. That is what this legislation does. We also want to make sure the skills acquired by the men and women of our Armed Forces while on Active Duty or in the National Guard become applicable to civilian life as well, and we have language in this bill that does that.

There is another issue which I didn't hear my Republican colleagues talking about but which is a very important part of the bill. We have a situation where some 2,300 veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have come back with a variety of wounds that make it impossible for them to have children. I will give one example.

Army veteran Matt Keil of Colorado was wounded by sniper fire in Iraq in 2007. The sniper's round struck Matt's neck, causing severe damage to a vital artery and his spinal cord. Through sheer determination and with the love and resolve of his wife Tracy, Matt's condition improved. He and Tracy began to consider having children. Doctors assured them that having children could be possible with the help of in vitro fertilization. The Keil family paid more than $30,000 for reproductive treatments.

In the legislation on the floor now, we say that is wrong. If a servicemember who was injured in war wants to have a family and is unable to have a family, we should make it possible for them to do so. If some of my colleagues on the other side disagree, that is fine. Let's have that debate. I think we owe it to the 2,300 men and women who were wounded in battle. They should have the opportunity to raise a family.

We all know that one of the uglier aspects of military service in recent years has been the epidemic of sexual assault. When we send people into the military, we do not want to see men and women being sexually assaulted. I know the Department of Defense is working hard to address this issue, but the fact is that many veterans who came home from war were sexually assaulted. This legislation contains important provisions that would improve the delivery of care and benefits to veterans who experienced sexual trauma while serving in the military.

This provision was inspired by Ruth Moore. She struggled for 23 years to receive VA disability compensation. This is a woman who was sexually assaulted and had a very difficult time proving that and getting the care she needed. We address that issue in this legislation.

In 2010, the Congress took a very significant step forward in saying to family members who were caring for disabled vets that we understood how terribly difficult it is for them. There are wives, sisters, brothers, and other family members who, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, are on call for veterans who have suffered serious injuries, and that is tough. That is very tough and stressful. There are wives and sisters and brothers out there who don't get any time off. They are on call 7 days a week.

We passed a caregivers act that provides a modest stipend. It provides training and time off for people who are caring for veterans 7 days a week. It says, you can have a day off. We will send in a nurse. We did that for post-9/11 veterans. The truth is there are tens of thousands of families who are experiencing and going through the same issues and have been doing so for decades. I believe it is appropriate that we expand the caregivers act to every generation of veterans and make sure that those families get the help they need.

I have heard some of my Republican colleagues say this legislation simply opens the door to every veteran in America to come in, and that when they come in, the quality of care is going to be diminished. That is simply an inaccurate statement, and I hope my colleagues read the legislation before they repeat that. It is not true. What we do is end the absurd and complicated situation of having hundreds and hundreds of different income eligibility standards. Instead of many hundreds of standards, there will be one in each State, and it will be the highest standard, which will mean that more veterans are able to come into VA health care. It does not open the door. We have been clear in saying we will not bring more veterans in until we make sure we have the infrastructure to deal with those veterans.

Some people have said: Well, why do you want to bring more veterans into the VA? The answer is pretty simple. I talked to many veterans in Vermont who would like to get into VA health care because of the respect and the knowledge about the needs of veterans and the high quality of care they get, and the fact that there is a strong network of primary health care facilities all over the country which they can access.

I will conclude for the moment by saying I very much appreciate the fact that every single Member of the Senate—I believe there were 99 votes—voted to proceed on this debate. I look forward to this debate. It is an important debate. I look forward to serious amendments which address the needs of veterans. I think it would be very disrespectful to the veterans community if we started injecting into this debate totally extraneous and highly political and partisan issues.

The issue of sanctions in Iran is a very important issue. People have honest differences of opinion. That is not an issue regarding VA health care. It is not an issue regarding the caregivers program. It is not an issue regarding dental care for our veterans.

Let's respect veterans and have this debate on veterans issues and not on extraneous political issues which will divide us. Let's try to come together and not be divided.

With that, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMEMBERING MAYOR MARSHA OGILVIE

Mr. RISCH. Madam President, I rise today to pay tribute to a distinguished Idahoan, Marcia H. Ogilvie, a loyal and steadfast mayor of Sandpoint, ID.

On January 8 of this year Mayor Ogilvie lost a valiant battle with cancer, and my State lost a good friend, a champion for women and children, and a tireless public servant.

Mayor Ogilvie was born at March Air Force Base in southern California and moved to the great State of Idaho in 1994. In the 20 years she made Idaho her home, she distinguished herself in service to others. As she once said—and many in Sandpoint now say—she won the hearts and minds of the people in Sandpoint.

Elected mayor just 2 years ago, and having served the previous 2 years on the city council, Mayor Ogilvie leaves a giant hole in those hearts and in the broader community. The business and professional experience Mayor Ogilvie brought was wide and varied and earned her the respect of many.

Early in her career, she served in restaurant and retail management. When she and her husband Francis arrived in Sandpoint, they opened a couple of small businesses—the Candy Cottage and All Smiles, a gift shop. But Marsha Ogilvie was not just about business. She cared deeply about the health, welfare, and success of women and children.

Soon after moving to Idaho, and well before entering public service, she established Kinderhaven, a nonprofit

community organization which is dedicated to supporting children in crisis. Founded in 1996, and under the vision and compassionate care of Marsha Ogilvie, more than 1,300 children have found the all-important help they needed in times of their great distress. So important to the Sandpoint community, Kinderhaven was named the grand prize winner in the 2002 Governor's Brightest Stars Awards.

In addition, Mrs. Ogilvie, who crossed paths with many women serving as volunteers in the Sandpoint community, started Women Honoring Women. It was designed to be a one-time event, but it has evolved since 1999 into an annual event to recognize and honor women in Bonner County, ID. It recognizes women 65 or older who are working to make a difference in the lives of others, who love to learn, and who exhibit qualities of leadership.

Marsha Ogilvie recognized these qualities in others because she too possessed them—well, all but one. She was only 64 when she passed away.

If these achievements were not enough, Marsha Ogilvie joined with three friends to co-author a children's book which was just recently published. ''Gigi's Enchanted Forest'' was a way to honor the life of a mutual friend of theirs who shared their hope for and love of children and a dedication to community service.

Mayor Marsha H. Ogilvie personified a life of giving and caring. Her unparalleled legacy of hard work, reaching out to her community, and recognizing those who help others in volunteer service is indelibly etched on the hearts and minds of those she served in Sandpoint, ID, and far beyond the city limits.

May God bless her husband, her family, and the hundreds of Idahoans who will miss her passion, exuberance, and spirit of joy.

I thank the Presiding Officer and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, late in the day on Friday—after reporters had gone home for the weekend—the Obama administration quietly released its new Medicare Advantage payment rates. The cuts the President wants to make to this program are potentially devastating to millions of Americans.

The next morning the New York Times' headline read: ''U.S. Proposes Cuts to Rates in Payments for Medicare.''

Politico wrote about it too. They said:

> The Obama Administration is proposing a major cut in 2015 payments to Medicare Advantage.

Fifteen million Americans depend on these health insurance plans the President wants to cut.

Instead of listening to seniors and investing in a program that works well, the Obama administration is doing everything conceivable to make sure Medicare Advantage fails.

Back in December the press gave President Obama the Lie of the Year Award for his statement that if you like your health care plan, you can keep it. Millions of people across America have now gotten letters saying their insurance plans are being canceled because of the Democrats' health care law. By cutting Medicare Advantage, I tell my colleagues, the Obama administration is now ensuring that even more Americans can't keep the health care plan they like.

Twenty-nine percent of all Medicare patients have chosen to enroll in Medicare Advantage. There is a reason for that. The Medicare Advantage Program lives up to its name by delivering clear advantages. The plans give extra benefits such as dental coverage, vision coverage, hearing benefits, wellness programs, and other benefits that are important to our seniors. Sometimes they offer smaller copayments, lower deductibles, and less out-of-pocket costs than the traditional Medicare Program does. Sometimes seniors even pay a higher monthly premium for these extra benefits, but often the benefits are financed through plan savings due to the programs and the way they work.

For many seniors Medicare Advantage is a good option. It is the right option for them. These are people who don't have a lot of money but who still want the peace of mind that comes with good health insurance. Those seniors are now facing much higher costs or lower benefits because of the Obama administration's decisions rolled out last Friday night. Because of this proposal and the administration's way to try to sneak it out on Friday, seniors are concerned and anxious about what the administration is also hiding.

Ever since the President and Democrats in Congress passed their health care law, they have been going after seniors who rely on Medicare. They raided a total of over $700 billion from Medicare—and we discussed that during the debate over the health care law. The money was taken from seniors on Medicare not to strengthen Medicare, not to secure the future of Medicare but to start a whole new government program for other people. There is a whole new bureaucracy, and it has been created by Washington Democrats in the health care law.

ObamaCare specifically targeted the Medicare Advantage Program, significant amounts of direct and indirect payment cuts totaling over $300 billion. That is 43 percent of the total Medicare cuts, just for this one program. So 29 percent of America's seniors rely on Medicare Advantage. Because about 29 percent of seniors on Medicare are in Medicare Advantage, they are responsible for 43 percent of the cuts.

Because of these cuts and other changes in the law, fewer private health care plans are going to be able to participate in Medicare Advantage in the future. That means a number of things. It means some people who rely on these plans are going to find out their plan is being canceled entirely. Some people in Iowa—thousands of people in Iowa—have already gotten letters canceling their Medicare Advantage plan.

The Kaiser Family Foundation looked at what the President's health care law does to seniors and they said that about a one-half million patients will lose their existing coverage—seniors on Medicare Advantage. These seniors are going to have fewer options to get the care they need from the doctor they choose at a lower cost. More of these people are going to be forced into a one-size-fits-all government plan. They are going to lose the insurance they had, insurance they liked and that worked for them.

Some people may find their new insurance network doesn't include the doctors they had before. We have seen this happening all across the country. As the major provider of Medicare Advantage had to try to make it all work, they had to eliminate many doctors from their plans, so that those doctors are not going to be able to keep their patients and those patients are not going to be able to keep their doctors, in spite of what the President told the American people when he looked into the camera and said: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor.

A lot of these people are going to see their costs increase. The Kaiser Family Foundation says the average out-of-pocket limit for Medicare Advantage plans is going to increase by $464 this year. The President and Washington Democrats said their health care plan was going to save people money. That is what the President told the country. That is why he said he did this whole health care law. He said it was going to save people money. That is what people wanted. The President told people what they wanted to hear, but he failed to give them what he promised. That is why his credibility ratings are down. That is why people believe he misled them intentionally, and that is why this administration is viewed to be incompetent by a majority of Americans. It turns out costs continue to go up because of the law.

This new round of cuts to Medicare Advantage is just another example of how the health care law is wrecking our health care system, not fixing it. America's health care system wasn't working before, but the President and the law Democrats voted for has made it worse.

Medicare is headed toward bankruptcy, but the Obama administration has rejected bipartisan solutions to reform and to strengthen the program. Through cuts such as the ones announced last Friday, the President's health care law takes money from Medicare and uses it to pay for something else.

There was actually a double data dump that occurred on Friday: the Medicare Advantage cuts that were announced late in the day, and then later than that the CMS—the Medicare/Medicaid services for the country—came out with their report and it reported that two-thirds of small businesses that provide health insurance for their employees would see their prices go up because of the health care law—two-thirds of small businesses. These are ones that by law don't have to provide health insurance—with employees of less than 50, they don't have to, by law, supply it, but they often do supply it. They do supply that insurance. I think about 17 million people get insurance that way, through work—businesses that are not mandated to supply the insurance, but they do it to get good workers. As a result, what they are seeing is that their rates are going up.

So that was part of the double data dump that occurred on Friday.

It was interesting to see a note that came out of the Democrats' lunch meeting today. It was just reported in Roll Call magazine. It said: ''A group of Senate Democrats is expected to launch a counteroffensive in favor of ObamaCare on Wednesday, a response to persistent attacks on the law from their Republican counterparts.''

First, I will point out the attacks on the law are coming from American citizens all around the country. It is what we hear at townhall meetings and it is what we hear as we travel around the country, people whose families are noting that they are paying more and getting less, losing their doctors and losing their insurance. But the report in Roll Call says:

> Democrats discussed the new endeavor touting benefits of the Affordable Care Act during Tuesday's weekly caucus lunch to a warm reception, according to Connecticut's Christopher S. Murphy, who is one of the senators leading the effort. A Senate Democrat aide said the formal rollout will come Wednesday.

I welcome the opportunity to hear what the Democrats have to say because the damage being done by this health care law to people all across the country is significant.

It is interesting because all we need to do is turn to Friday's New York Times, Robert Pear, an excellent writer for the Times, who had, I thought, a fascinating story. He took two pages of the paper: ''Public Sector Capping Part-Time Hours . . . '' Public sector capping part-time hours. Why? Right here in the headline: ''to Skirt Health Care Law.''

Let me start: ''Cities, counties, public schools and community colleges around the country''—we are not talking about businesses or fast food chains; we are talking about cities, counties, public schools and community colleges around the country—''have limited or reduced the work hours of part-time employees . . .'' Why? ''to avoid having to provide them with health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, state and local officials say. The cuts to public sector employment, which has failed to rebound since the recession''—it says right here—''could serve as a powerful political weapon for Republican critics of the health care law, who claim it is creating a drain on the economy.''

It is creating a drain on the economy. We have two folks in the picture in Medina, OH, working on a trash truck. One of the gentlemen talks about his hours being limited to 29 hours. He called it ''a hit to his wallet.''

The President is fighting to talk about raising the minimum wage, when people are actually losing take-home pay. It is impacting their wages, the health care law is. It is impacting how much money they take home at the end of the week.

The next page talks about somebody who works as a clerk in the parks department saw her hours drop from 38 a week to 35 and then to 29. Why? Because of the health care law and the 30-hour limit.

It is interesting to go through the list of the different jobs of people who are losing hours, who want to work. These are hard-working Americans who are having their hours cut—public sector workers, people who work for cities, counties, public schools, community colleges. The list goes on: police dispatchers, prison guards, substitute teachers, bus drivers, athletic coaches, school custodians, cafeteria workers, and part-time professors; office clerks, sanitation workers, park inspectors—all in all, people who are being hurt because of the President's health care law and the mandates and the way it is put together by this President and the Democrats who voted for it.

It is interesting to see the Senator from Connecticut mentioned here as leading the effort, and I would recommend to him this article by Robert Pear in Friday's New York Times, who goes specifically to the core of what is happening in Connecticut, in that Senator's home State. It says:

> Mark Benigni, the superintendent of schools in Meriden, CT—a public school, public sector—and a board member of the American Association of School Administrators said in an interview that the new health care law is having ''unintended consequences for school systems across the Nation.''

This health care law is full of unintended consequences. Now we have someone who is a board member for the American Association of School Administrators saying that the health care law is having unintended consequences for school systems across the Nation. He specifically says, in Connecticut, as in many States—this is the article now:

> In Connecticut, as in many States, significant numbers of part-time school employees work more than 30 hours a week and do not receive health benefits.

Quoting the superintendent in schools in Meriden, CT:

> Are we supposed to lay off full-time teachers? Are we supposed to lay off full-time teachers so that we can provide insurance coverage to part-time employees?

The superintendent goes on to say:

> If I had to cut five reading teachers to pay for health benefits for substitute teachers, I am not sure that would be best for our students.

So I would ask the President of the United States: What do you want? These are the choices that because of your health care law, crammed down the throats of the American people, you are asking the public sector of our country to make. Get rid of five reading teachers in Meriden, CT, to pay for expensive health insurance policies for substitute teachers. That superintendent is trying to say, I am not sure that what the law requires would be best for our students.

I think this law was not well-thought-out, was not well planned. So I will be interested tomorrow to see Senate Democrats come to the floor with their ObamaCare PR counteroffensive and explain to the American people why they are being faced with a disastrous Web site rollout 4 days after the President told the American people it will be easier to use than Amazon and cheaper than your cell phone bill and you can keep your doctor if you like your doctor. Let them explain why 5 million people then got letters from insurance companies saying their insurance policies have been canceled; why the Web site failure is just the tip of the iceberg that the American people are seeing right now in terms of premiums going up, canceled policies, can't keep their doctor, higher out-of-pocket costs, higher copays, higher deductibles, all in spite of the President's glowing promises which, in my opinion, were made to deceive the American people in an effort to pass a health care law which many people see as bad for patients, bad for providers, and bad for the taxpayers.

I will continue to come to the floor and talk about what I hear as I go home to Wyoming each week in terms of a health care law which is not providing the patients what they asked for, what they need, and what they were promised.

Thank you. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I wish to thank my colleague Senator BARRASSO for coming to the floor, and now I would like to give a second opinion to what he has just said.

He said he wants to wait until tomorrow to hear some success stories about the Affordable Care Act. I am going to give him a preview tonight.

Ray Romanowski—62 years old, city of Chicago, musician, part-time employee, barrel-chested Polish guy who belongs in the city of Chicago—sat next to me at a clinic, patted his wallet and said: Guess what, Senator. I have health insurance for the first time in my life, and it feels good.

Judy takes care of hotel rooms down in southern Illinois, a place that I stay. She is over there in the hospitality room. Same story: 62 years old, worked every day she could and never had health insurance one day in her life. She was diagnosed with diabetes and, thank God, she now has, because of the Affordable Care Act, health insurance.

Those are just a couple of stories.

What the Senator from Wyoming did not tell you is that there are aspects of this Affordable Care Act which American families value. Do you have a child in your family who is sick with maybe asthma, diabetes? Is your wife a cancer survivor? In the old days before the Affordable Care Act, that meant it would be hard to get health insurance and, if you could, it would be very expensive.

So we changed it. We said: You cannot discriminate against families because somebody happens to be sick. Those of us who have raised families know that happens pretty regularly. So that protection is in the law, and it is a protection which some of the absolutists want to repeal. Get rid of it. Let's get back to the good old days when a sick child would basically disqualify a family from health insurance.

It used to be that insurance companies had odd ways of basically rating people when it came to premiums. One of the disabilities they identified was if the person seeking health insurance was a woman. They would discriminate against women seeking health insurance because it is possible they would become pregnant and more expensive. We did away with that discrimination as well.

Then there were lifetime limits. Madam President, $100,000 in health insurance coverage may sound great, but if you go into the hospital or see the doctor the next day and you are told you have cancer and have to face radiation, chemotherapy, and more, $100,000 will not last very long, and pretty soon you are into life savings and pretty soon after that you are into bankruptcy, something the Presiding Officer knows very well.

So we eliminated the lifetime limits on health insurance policies as part of the Affordable Care Act. I do not hear the Senator from Wyoming and others suggesting they want to go back to those days. Do they?

The bottom line is this: The Affordable Care Act is a good law. We wrote it and passed it without the help of any Republicans. Not a single one of them would step up and join us in this effort. Now they have done nothing for the last 4 years but criticize it.

I will say this. It is not perfect. It can be improved. I will invite the Senator from Wyoming, who is a medical doctor and a man I respect, to join us in improving it. Let's find a way to make it better. Let's fix it. There are things that can be fixed into law. That is what people sent us here to do. We can give speeches about how good or bad it is, but most Americans want it to work. They want health insurance that is affordable and available and accessible, and they want to make sure they are going to be treated fairly once they buy it.

I think the marketplaces we will tell you about are working for a lot of families, and we are going to come to the floor to tell those stories. I know the other side spent a long time talking about what they consider to be shortcomings, and there are some obvious shortcomings with the Affordable Care Act. The rollout was a disaster. Anybody who says otherwise was not paying attention. For 60 days we worked to get our Web sites up and running, and some of them still leave room to be desired, leave room for improvement.

But I talked to a businessman in Chicago last week, and he said: It is a good thing my business failures are not on the front page of the paper every day because I have made a lot of mistakes, but I keep going until I get it right. That is what we ought to do, keep going until we get it absolutely right.

We have a good start, trying to bring 60 million uninsured Americans under protection of health insurance, to allow people to shop for the best policy for their family. That is realistic.

I also want to add one thing. The critics of the Affordable Care Act assume that before we passed it, health insurance premiums did not increase. We know better. Particularly for those who had small businesses and individuals, their policies were canceled on average once every 24 months, and their health insurance premiums went up 12 to 20 percent.

A friend of mine has a small trucking company. He tried to cover his employees who worked for him and their families until one of the employees had a sick baby, and then the health insurance premiums went through the roof and they all were out on their own. With the help from the employer—what he used to pay each month—they had a helping hand looking for health insurance.

He went to buy health insurance for himself—himself, the owner of the company—and his wife. It turned out that if you turned in a claim this year for a problem you had with your foot, next year that company health insurance plan—the one he bought—would not cover anything related to your feet. So you slowly exclude all the possible claims that can be made for profitability. Then, in the end, you have a worthless health insurance policy.

Those were the old days. I would say to the Senator from Wyoming and his friends, we are not going back to the old days. We can improve this law. Let's work together to do it. But we are not going back to the days of discrimination based on preexisting conditions, lifetime limits on policies, discrimination against women, excluding children from the health insurance of their families—the things that really were wrong with the system.

Help us make it better, but do not just come here and complain. I think people expect us to be more positive and constructive.

Madam President, I rise in strong support of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits Act of 2014. Chairman BERNIE SANDERS of Vermont has put together a comprehensive improvement, which I support. He is new as chairman, but he is off to a flying start.

The bill reminds us of our obligations to veterans. I especially appreciate that he worked with me on a few priorities. It authorizes a new $10 million initiative in prosthetics and orthotics. Limb loss is one of the signature wounds of Iraq and Afghanistan. There are not enough medical professionals with the expertise needed to fit veterans with the best orthotic or prosthetic for their injuries.

Now the Department of Veterans Affairs can partner with universities to expand the number of master's degree programs so our wounded warriors continue to receive the best care.

This veterans package also addresses a problem I have been working to fix that allows veterans to consolidate student loans or participate in student loan forgiveness without penalty.

Congress capped the interest rate for servicemembers at 6 percent several years ago, but a loophole has prevented servicemembers from keeping that protection if they consolidate their student debt or enroll in the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. This bill closes that loophole.

The bill makes sure veterans using their GI bill education benefits will pay instate tuition rates. Senator SANDERS has a good bill when it comes to student loans.

There is one provision in it of special interest and importance to me. Several years ago one of our colleagues, a Senator from New York by the name of Hillary Clinton, came up with a great idea. Senator Clinton said: We ought to help the caregivers for disabled vets. I liked the idea a lot and was kind of envious that she came up with it first. Then she moved on to be Secretary of State. So I called her at the State Department and asked: Hillary, is it OK if I take up your bill on caregivers? She said: Be my guest. And I did. I introduced the Hillary Clinton caregivers bill, and ultimately, with the help of Senator Akaka and others, we passed it.

Here is what it says. If you had someone who was injured after 9/11 and disabled and you were prepared to give them care, we are going to help you. For that wife who stands by her husband, a husband who stands by his wife, a mother or father helping the disabled

vet, here is what we will offer to you: first, the very best in skilled nursing training so you know how to take care of your veteran and do it the right way; secondly, a respite. Two weeks out of the year you get a vacation. We are going to send in some skilled nurses so you can go off and relax. You deserve it after spending 50 weeks caring for this veteran. Third, if you are in a bind economically, financially, we want to make sure you are going to have enough money to survive. So we offered a monthly stipend to those caregivers who are helping.

Let me tell you some stories that I think illustrate this so well, why it is important and why it is working.

In 2005, Eric Edmundson was a 26-year-old Army sergeant when he survived a roadside blast in Iraq. He went into cardiac arrest while waiting for a transport to a military hospital. His brain was deprived of oxygen for almost 30 minutes. He became a quadriplegic as a result of the injuries.

The VA basically told Eric's parents Ed and Beth that there was no hope and no place to turn. The doctors said Eric would spend the rest of his life in a vegetative state and he should be sent to a nursing home. His dad said not only no, but hell no, this is my 26-year-old son, and I am not giving up on him.

So Eric was transferred to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, which is where I first met him. His recovery was incredible. His mom and dad stayed by their son's side until the day when we proudly watched Eric, with a helping hand, literally walk out of the hospital in his dress uniform—a sign of dramatic progress in just a few months.

Today, he is living in North Carolina with his wife and two children—beautiful kids. His parents are his full-time caregivers, and they share their home with Eric and his wife.

But even these family caregivers like Ed and Beth need a helping hand. They told me about Hillary Clinton's bill, and they got me started. I am glad they did. Because now that it has become the law, 12,000 families just like theirs across America are getting the helping hand of the caregiver program. It helps the veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, with their families, be where they want to be: at home with their families. If you want to get down to the bottom line, it saves the government money. It costs a lot more money to put people in VA facilities than to help these families keep the veterans at home where they want to be.

Let me show you one other one, which I think is a great story. This is the story of Yuriy Zmysly, who was a marine serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. He returned to the United States for what was going to be a routine surgery at a military hospital, but because of complications from the surgery, from an appendix procedure, he was left with a severe brain injury.

Aimee—who is shown right here in this picture—was his fiance at the time. When Yuriy reached the point where he came out in a state where he was in a wheelchair and struggling, Aimee said: I promised you I loved you and I was going to marry you and we are going through with it. And she did. She married Yuriy and stood by his side. They have a beautiful daughter Adelina, whom I met just a couple weeks ago in Chicago. She is 4 months old. It is for caregivers such as Aimee, who dropped everything and even dropped out of school to help care for this disabled vet Yuriy that this program is designed.

I am proud of this program. I think the 256—I think that is the right number—caregiver families in Illinois have a special helping hand as they help our disabled vets. We need to expand it. BERNIE SANDERS does just that. He expands this program beyond those veterans who were afflicted after 9/11 to those who were afflicted before, from previous conflicts, from previous service to our country.

This caregivers program is the right thing to do. These men and women who care for our disabled vets are truly saints and angels, and we ought to stand by them. Giving them a helping hand through this expansion of the caregivers program is right for America, it is right for our vets, and it is right for us to do for the men and women who risked their lives for our country.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. BURR addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the Senator withhold?

Mr. DURBIN. I withhold.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Illinois, and I should have told him I was going to come out to be recognized. Let me thank him because he has raised a very important issue on caregivers.

I also want to thank him for the interest he took in Eric Edmundson, who is from North Carolina. I might add to the story, for my colleagues, there was not a caregiver program when Eric Edmundson's dad took over his care. He did what I think parents have a tendency to do. He said: It can be better for my son if I take control of it—and he ended up in Illinois at his dad's request. Although he has not made a full recovery, he has made a spectacular recovery from the prognosis. I know my good friend from Illinois has to go, but I appreciate him highlighting that.

Let me just say that I think all Members of the Senate would like to expand the caregivers program. I wrote the caregivers program. Senator Akaka, who was then the chairman, came to the floor and it was passed. As written, section 303 would expand the caregivers program to veterans of all eras. Let me say that again: Veterans of all eras we would extend the caregivers program to if the Sanders bill was passed.

I have the alternative bill, which is in the process of being filed. It does not expand the caregivers program—a program I am passionate about. I wrote it. It does not do it for a reason, and I want to turn to Senator Akaka's comments on the Senate floor when we passed this bill, where Senator Akaka, the chair of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, said this:

> [O]ne, the needs and circumstances of the newest veterans in terms of the injuries are different—different—from those of veterans from earlier eras; two, the family situation of the younger veterans is different from that of older veterans; and three, by targeting this initiative on a specific group of veterans, the likelihood of a successful undertaking is enhanced.

To me, the most important of these reasons mentioned by Senator Akaka was the belief that the VA would not be able to implement a program of that magnitude. That is why caregivers was crafted to be a program that we ramped up over time. It was targeted at a very specific population, and we envisioned that as the VA got more proficient at actual training and implementation of this program, it would be ramped up.

The VA has proven us right. They have had trouble in implementing this program in what is a very limited program. Their rollout and management of the program has been flawed in several areas and has been a disservice to those veterans in need of these critical services. Since the start of the program 2½ years ago, several problems have been brought to my attention. These problems include decisions regarding eligibility for the program which are inconsistent across the country—no quality assurance program to monitor the quality, consistency and timeliness of those decisions, and no formal process to appeal the decisions of eligibility for caregiver assistance.

Let me highlight the issues with this program. I want to share some stories of veterans' experiences. A veteran applied to the program at the VA in Colorado. His application was denied. Yet, after moving from Colorado to Florida, he applied again using the exact same information he had previously submitted in Colorado. The VA in Florida granted his application. How can this happen? It is because we have an agency that has yet to draw on the consistency needed to apply equally to our veterans.

Another veteran in Florida suffered from multiple gunshot wounds resulting in paraplegia. VA denied him entry into the program because he did not require assistance with at least one activity of daily living or ADL. He was being compensated through an aid and assistance or A & A program. I find it interesting that this veteran did not qualify for caregivers. He was actually compensated under the aid and assistance program because what he needs is ADL services, not just the one required under the caregiver program.

In addition, I have also heard many veterans and their caregivers were

treated rudely by the VA staff when applying to these programs for a PTSD diagnosis. VA staff have told them that PTSD—get this—that PTSD is not a disability that requires assistance with ADLs or activities of daily living.

Assistance with the activities of daily living is only one of the four criteria needed as having a serious injury. Under the law, a veteran needs to meet one of the four. Even the appeals process does not seem to be well thought through. You see, we can write the laws, but it is the agency's regulations that they write that dictate how these programs are run.

VA says that they have an appeals process. However, it is vastly different from the appeals process at VBA, the Veterans Benefit Administration. It leaves Veterans Service Officers or VSOs at a disadvantage to help veterans and their caregivers. VSOs have been told that VA considers it a medical decision and they cannot question the denial. The only recourse veterans and their caregivers have is to appeal to the medical center director. The problem with this is that it was the medical center director who denied the appeal in the first place.

I am going to go on as the days go on, describing the things in this program that we would all like to embrace, things that I think every Member of the Senate says: Yes, we ought to do this for veterans. Here is the problem. If we have a broken system, jamming more people into it is actually the worst thing we can do.

As I said earlier, there is nothing in the Sanders bill to fix the things that are broken at VA. There is nothing in the alternative bill to fix things in the VA. But the one thing that I do not do in the alternative bill is I do not jam millions more veterans into the system. Caregivers should be expanded as VA perfects how to implement it, to educate the caregivers, to be able to address the concerns, and, more importantly, the intent of why we wrote the program.

Enrollment or access to VA should only open if we have the health care professionals or the facilities to handle them, but not to crowd out those current veterans who leave the battlefield today and need the services that only the VA can provide. So, even though in everybody's wish list we would like to expand to every veteran, in the caregiver program we would like to expand to everybody who wants to care for a loved one, the truth is, we do the ones who are in the system an injustice if we are not prepared to be able to implement it, to handle it. That is the difference between the Sanders bill and my alternative. We simply look at the things that have bipartisan support, but do not necessarily grow the problem worse than it is today.

I said earlier, my regret—and I see my colleague from South Carolina is here. My regret in this debate is that we are not on the Senate floor debating reforms to the Veterans' Administration. I think the presiding officer would agree that there are areas—these are areas that do not have a partisan leaning. When we look at our Nation's veterans, we do not see one side of the aisle or the other. We see a promise we made to them and a commitment we have got to fulfill.

To ignore the things that need reform really is a mistake. To talk about expanding the population without reforming these areas, quite frankly, is disingenuous to the veterans to whom we owe so much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRAHAM. Madam President, one, I would like to compliment Senator BURR for trying to find a way to improve veterans health care. I think the comment he made is pretty accurate. Before you expand a system that is clearly broken, it looks to me like you would want to fix it.

There is a bipartisan view that it is broken. A lot of solutions have bipartisan support. But we are where we are. I know Senator SANDERS is very genuine about wanting to expand veterans' benefits. I certainly understand where Senator BURR is coming from. We want to, one, pay for whatever we do, because we are $17 trillion in debt. But, two, we have to look at the broken system. If you include another 14 million veterans, people who are not service connected and make them overnight eligible for VA health care that is in short supply, you will frustrate the ones who need it the most and take a weak system and completely break it. It seems to me that is not helping veterans at all.

But part of the package that Senator BURR has authored also deals with another problem of great and immediate concern: imposing sanctions on the Iranian nuclear program if the negotiations fail to deliver the desired result.

This is an unfortunate moment for me. Senators MENENDEZ and KIRK have been a team for a long time working to impose sanctions on the Iranian government as they march toward a nuclear weapon. We have imposed 16 rounds of sanctions since 1987; 9 U.N. Security Council resolutions since 2006, demanding the full and sustained suspension of all uranium enrichment related and reprocessing activities and its full cooperation with the IAEA.

This body has been bipartisan when it comes to the Iranian nuclear program and our support for Israel. Senator MENENDEZ has been one of the leading voices in the entire Congress. He deserves lots of credit. He is my friend. We have a new round of sanctions that are bipartisan. We have 17 Democratic cosponsors. We have all but two Republicans. So we have 59 cosponsors that would allow sanctions to be available and in place if we do not reach a final deal in this round of negotiations in the P5+1.

Why is it important that the Congress reimpose sanctions through new legislation if there is failure? No. 1, the sanctions are designed to get the end game right. I believe that the only successful outcome through negotiations would be to dismantle the plutonium-producing reactor. The Iranians do not need a plutonium-producing reactor for a civilian nuclear power program to comply with the U.N. resolution that requires the removal of all highly enriched uranium. A lot of highly enriched uranium is now in the hands of the Iranian government. The U.N., of all bodies, has asked for it to be removed and turned over to the international community.

I worry that if you leave this highly enriched uranium in place in Iran, we will live to regret it. A dirty bomb becomes a real possibility. The other aspect of a final deal that has to be accomplished, in my view, is that the Iranian regime should be out of the enrichment business.

There are 15 nations that have nuclear power programs that do not enrich uranium. Mexico and Canada are two of those nations. We are objecting to the South Koreans who want to go into the enrichment business. I do not mind South Korea having a nuclear power program, but we really have to watch the spread of nuclear proliferation through the enrichment of uranium.

It is imminently possible to have a nuclear power program and have the fuel cycle controlled. You do not need to enrich to have commercial nuclear power. If you were going to make a list of countries that are unreliable and dangerous, and you would not want to give the right to enrich, I think Iran would be at the top. Just look at how this regime has behaved over the last 30 years. I do not have to time to go into all of the ''list of horribles,'' but our resolutions regarding the Iranian nuclear program list them very well.

So we are at an impasse now. The Republican position is that we should have a new sanctions vote on the bipartisan sanctions bill now while the negotiations are going on to reinforce to the international community that we are very serious about pressure being applied to the Iranians until we get the deal that we all can live with. I think it is fair to say that the Iranians would not be in negotiations without crippling sanctions.

I want to give credit to the Obama administration for implementing a sanctions regime that really did cripple the Iranian economy, and it has gotten them to the table. Unfortunately, the interim deal has absolutely undercut all of our gains. I will give you some details as to why all we have accomplished has been undercut and the sanctions regime that got the Iranians to the table is crumbling before our eyes.

Here is what our allies in Israel say. The prime minister of Israel said: ''Iran got the deal of the century, the international community got a bad deal.'' I think he is absolutely right. Under the interim deal, not 1 ounce of highly enriched uranium is required to be taken out of Iran. Some of it would be chemically altered, and you can reverse that chemical process so that it could be processed for weapons use later down the road.

Not one centrifuge has been destroyed. Of the 16,000 to 18,000 centrifuges, not one has been destroyed. The plutonium-producing reactor is not being dismantled. It has been mothballed, for lack of a better word. I am not so sure it is even in a mothball status.

So the prime minister of Israel says: ''Iran got the deal of the century, the international community got a bad deal.'' Again, I would agree. Nothing has been accomplished in the interim deal. The interim deal is so far away from a final deal, I do not see how you get there.

We have to dismantle the plutonium reactor completely, not just stop its construction or delay its construction. We should remove all of the highly enriched uranium out of the hands of the ayatollahs because it is too dangerous to leave it there. The U.N. agrees with that. That is the end position. They should not be allowed to enrich. If the Iranians want a peaceful nuclear power program, I will be the first to say: That is fine. Build a reactor in Iran. Build a couple of reactors if you like. Have the Russians help the Iranians construct their reactor, as long as the international community can control the fuel cycle.

There is no need to enrich in Iran for a peaceful nuclear power program. We would be crazy as a nation and a world to give this regime the right to enrich uranium and have a breakout, to go from low-level enrichment to 90 percent, to make a nuclear weapon. I think that is what they are trying to do. I would like every Senator to be able to answer a question from their constituents about this issue. Do you believe the Iranians have been trying to build a nuclear bomb rather than a nuclear power program?

It is clear to me they have been trying to build a nuclear bomb for a very long time. They get right up to the edge. They have one of the most sophisticated enrichment programs in the world. I do not think it is designed to produce peaceful nuclear power.

Here is what the head of Iran's nuclear agency said last night:

> The iceberg of sanctions is melting while our centrifuges are also still working. This is our greatest achievement.

He is right. I mean, what more can I say? The head of the Iranian nuclear agency, said on Iranian state television:

> The iceberg of sanctions is melting while our centrifuges are also still working. This is our greatest achievement.

This is what the foreign minister said:

> The White House tries to portray it as basically a dismantling of Iranian's nuclear program.

The interim deal—

> We are not dismantling any centrifuges, we're not dismantling any equipment, we're simply not producing, not enriching over 5 percent.

They are telling us and the world, with this interim deal, they are not dismantling a damn thing.

President Rouhani, the new moderate—if you believe that, I have some property I want to sell you—said on CNN: ''So there will be no destruction of centrifuges—of existing centrifuges?'' President Rouhani said: ''No. No, not at all.''

Well, if you believe, as I do, they should be out of the enrichment business, then all the centrifuges should be dismantled and destroyed. Because to allow this regime to continue to enrich is dangerous and, quite frankly, will lead to a military conflict between Israel and Iran and maybe others.

President Rouhani tweeted:

> Our relationship with the world is based on Iranian nation's interest. In Geneva agreement, world powers surrendered to Iran's national will.

Well, maybe that is bluster. When you look at the evidence, it's not so much bluster. The Deputy Foreign Minister said of the interconnections between networks of centrifuges that have been used to enrich uranium to 20 percent, so that they can enrich only to 5 percent:

> These interconnections can be removed in a day and connected again in a day.

So he is basically saying all we have done is basically pull the plug and we will just put it back in if we need to.

Here is what has happened since the interim deal with the sanctions regime. President Rouhani declared:

> We have struck the first blow to the illegal sanctions, in the fields of insurance, shipping, the banking system, foodstuffs and medicine and exports of petrochemical materials.

He tweeted:

> You are witness to how foreign firms are visiting our country; 117 political delegations have come here.

France, Turkey, Georgia, Ireland, Tunisia, Kazakhstan, China, Italy, India, Austria, and Sweden. The French chamber of commerce led a delegation to Iran not long ago with the head of Michelin Tire Company. I have been talking to the Michelin Company. They are not going to violate the sanctions, but they do believe that after this interim deal the smart money is that the sanctions are behind us.

The International Monetary Fund predicted Iran's economy could turn around due to the interim agreement. Listen to this:

> The economy in Iran that was crippled because of the sanctions could turn around based on the interim agreement that doesn't dismantle or remove anything. Prospects for 2014 and 2015 have improved with an interim P5+1 agreement. Real GDP growing by 1 to 2 percent in 2014–2015. Inflation would potentially climb 15 to 20 percent. India's oil imports from Iran more than doubled in January from a month earlier. China has emerged as Iran's top trading partner, with nonoil trade hitting $13 billion over the last 10 months. U.S. aerospace companies are seeking permission to sell airline parts to Iran for the first time in three decades. Iran has signed a deal to sell Iraq arms and ammunition worth $195 million, according to documents seen by Reuters. At least 13 major international companies have said in recent weeks they aim to reenter the Iranian marketplace over the next several months.

These sanctions, my friends on the other side, are crumbling. If we do not reset what is going on, the leverage we have gained is being lost. We are marching toward a disaster. Having a new round of sanctions passed by Congress would tell the international community from our point of view this is not behind us, we are not going to take the pressure off until we get a result that makes our country and our allies in the region safe, particularly Israel. If we do not act now, it will be too late.

To our friends at the White House: When you threaten to veto legislation and you accuse people who want to impose sanctions if the deal fails as wanting to going to war, I am afraid you completely misunderstand the situation as it really exists. I am willing to give you credit for imposing the sanctions in a forceful way, but you are naive and dangerous in your thought process if you think we can now negotiate with the sanctions crumbling and get the right answer.

The Iranian monetary unit, the rial, has appreciated by over 25 percent. The Iranian economy is rebounding after the interim deal. They are back in business. Inflation is down, the value of their currency is up, people are lining up to do business in Iran, the sanctions are crumbling, and the U.S. Senate sits quiet.

All I can say is that we have a chance to turn this around before it is too late. I believe the best thing we could do as a body is for Republicans and Democrats to pass a new round of sanctions that would only take place at the end of the 6-month period if a final deal is not achieved that results in the things I have outlined.

The bipartisan sanction bill reinforces the end game of basically dismantling the ability of the Iranians to develop a nuclear weapon. We have specific language in the sanctions bill that would get us to a good outcome. I am afraid by the time the 6 months is up, the economy in Iran will have rebounded and the will of the international community to go through this process again will have been lost.

Right now the smart money is that Iran is a place you can soon do business, the sanctions are history, and our European allies, I am afraid, will accept a deal with the Iranians that is not in our national interest and will certainly not be good for our allies.

I am very worried the P5+1 has already conceded in their own mind some

enrichment capability in the hands of the Iranian regime for the purpose of face saving, supposedly. We should not worry about allowing the Iranians to save face, given what they have done to our soldiers in Iraq, the amount of terrorism they have spread throughout the world, and the way they have behaved. I am not in the face-saving business when it comes to Iran. I am in protecting America's national security interest business.

I do not mind the Iranians having a nuclear power program for peaceful purposes, as long as you control the fuel cycle. But if they want more than that, that tells you all you need to know about what their ambitions are.

I say to my colleagues on the other side: If you allow any enrichment capability left in the hands of the Shia Persians in Iran, the Sunni Arabs are going to insist on a like capability. And I am here to tell you if you want to turn the Mideast into the ultimate powder keg, allow the Iranians to have an enrichment program. Because every Sunni Arab nation that can afford one will want a like program. If you think you can allow the Iranians to enrich uranium and the Sunni Arabs will sit on the sidelines and do nothing, you don't understand the Mideast. If you want to set the world on the road to Armageddon, that will be the end of nonproliferation in the Mideast. The interim deal is a bad deal for the world, according to the Prime Minister, and a great deal for Iran. The Prime Minister of Israel is right.

If this administration is contemplating a final agreement that does not remove all the highly enriched uranium in Iran, consistent with the U.N. resolution, it is making a mistake for the ages. If this administration is going to sign on to a deal that allows enrichment to continue in Iran, where they now have a class of centrifuges that can take less than 5 percent uranium and spin it up to 90 percent, that will be a mistake for the ages.

This is North Korea in the making. But unlike North Korea, where they eventually went nuclear after the international community, through inspections and sanctions, tried to stop their program, Japan and South Korea have yet to feel the need to obtain a nuclear weapon to counter the North Koreans. I can assure you the Sunni Arab nations in the Mideast will not put themselves in that position. All you have to do is ask them.

I challenge every Member of this body to get on the phone and call the major Sunni Arab states and ask them a simple question: If the Iranians are allowed to enrich, will you insist on the same right? See what they tell you.

We have a chance here, if we are smart, to reset the table before these sanctions completely crumble, and they are. If you think you can wait 6 months, have them completely crumble and reimpose sanctions, you are kidding yourself, because the world is not going to go down that road.

What will happen if this negotiation with Iran fails to deliver what I think is the right outcome—a peaceful nuclear power program without any capability to make a nuclear weapon—I think the people throughout the region are going to respond forcefully and in kind and our friends in Israel and the world are hurt.

Can Israel tolerate the ayatollahs in Iran having the ability to develop a nuclear weapon and the only thing between the State of Israel's security is a bunch of U.N. inspectors? Now think about that. Would you put America's national security at risk, and the only thing between a hostile nation having a nuclear weapon and threatening to wipe us off the map and success is a bunch of U.N. inspectors? How well did that work in North Korea? That is not a viable outcome.

We have to stop this program completely. It must be dismantled, not mothballed. It has to be dismantled. If the Iranians want a nuclear powerplant for peaceful purposes, they can have one as long as somebody responsible controls the fuel cycle.

We are headed toward a disaster if we don't act pretty quickly. I don't mean to be so dire, but look at the Mideast. Look at the Syrian effort to contain the Syrian chemical weapons program. These thuggish regimes are not going to turn over the advantages they have until the regime itself is threatened. I believe the Iranians, after Syria, do not believe anymore that our country has the will to use military force as a last resort to stop their nuclear program. No matter what President Obama says, his actions speak far louder than his words. We could change things if the Congress would impose new sanctions, bipartisan in nature. It would actually allow the administration some leverage they do not have today.

The reason for the bipartisan bill, as in the Burr alternative to the Sanders bill, is that many of us believe now that time is not on our side. And to my friends on the other side, I hate the fact we have now split on what to do about Iran and how to impose sanctions. I have enjoyed, as much as anything in my entire time in the Senate, working with my Democratic and Republican colleagues to craft policies designed to get the right answer when it comes to the Iranian nuclear threat. But we are now in a different spot.

As much as I hate it, I feel compelled, from my point of view, to use every opportunity this body presents to bring up the issue. If you do not believe the sanctions are crumbling, I would love to hear your explanation as to why they are still working, given the information that is overwhelming.

So I hope in the coming days we can regain that bipartisanship. The majority leader, several months ago, promised a vote on Iran sanctions if we could find a bipartisan bill. He made that promise, and I will quote that later in the week. What has happened between then and now is the President has weighed in. He has tried to lock his party down and he has threatened to veto this sanctions bill.

Now is not the time to turn the Senate over to the Obama administration, which does not have a very good track record when it comes to policing the Mideast. Actually, we are helping them, whether they believe it or not. The last thing I want is a conflict anywhere in the world that can be avoided, but here are our choices: If the negotiations fail, Israel will not stand for a nuclear-capable Iran. If you attack Iran, you open Pandora's box and many bad things can happen.

I can tell you this, if there is a war between us and Iran, they lose, we win. This is not much of a debate militarily. But it is always a terrible thing to go to war unless you absolutely have to. So if the Iranians believe we are serious about sanctions and we are serious about using military force as a last resort, we may actually still get the right answer.

If they don't believe that, we are putting Israel and our allies in a terrible spot. If the Iranian program survives these negotiations and they march toward a nuclear weapon as the North Koreans did, if the U.N. inspections fail and they achieve their goal of a nuclear weapon, then we have emptied Pandora's box, because every Sunni Arab state will follow in kind. Then only God knows what happens next. We have a chance to avoid that.

But Israel will never stand for the proposition that the only thing between the ayatollahs having a nuclear weapon and the State of Israel's survival is a bunch of U.N. inspectors trying to control a program with a live capability; and Sunni Arab states will not allow the Iranians to enrich without them claiming an equal right. All this can be avoided if we act decisively. But if we continue to wait and allow the sanctions to crumble, God help us all.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO ED KOREN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, late this week, Vermont will recognize the noteworthy legacy of Ed Koren, who

was recently named Vermont's second Cartoonist Laureate. A resident of Brookfield, VT, Mr. Koren is best known nationally for his distinctive creature cartoons that appear in the New Yorker. His work has also been featured in many other publications.

Mr. Koren grew up in Mount Vernon, NY, and attended Columbia University, where he first began sketching cartoons for the university's magazine. Encouraged by a favorable review of one of his earliest works, Mr. Koren then dedicated himself to drawing investigative and satirical cartoons. His hard work, quick wit, and unique social commentary are evidenced in his work. In true Vermont tradition, he has also found the time to volunteer as a firefighter in his small community for the past 26 years.

I am proud to recognize Ed Koren's achievement as Vermont's Cartoon Laureate. The Vermont Digger recently published a profile of this accomplished man who has adopted Vermont as his home that captures all that is so unique about his character and creativity. I ask that the article, ''Cartoonist Ed Koren earns a Vermont laurel, but don't expect him to rest on it,'' be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Vermont Digger, Feb. 16, 2014]

THIS STATE: CARTOONIST ED KOREN EARNS A VERMONT LAUREL, BUT DON'T EXPECT HIM TO REST ON IT

(By Andrew Nemethy)

From his rambling 1840s farmhouse in Brookfield in central Vermont, Ed Koren looks out on Sunset Lake and a quintessential Vermont village whose famed floating bridge is an icon of the state. But as a cartoonist, Koren's off-beat, pinballing mind is focused on a different view, as he scans the strange landscape of human foibles, fads, social mores and culture. It's a scene that has sustained him for more than five decades.

''There's something always new, or quirky or nutty or outrageous,'' he says, describing the lode of material that keeps inspiring his cartoons. ''To me, it never ends, and it's great for that.''

By a cranial alchemy that even he is hard-pressed to explain, what he sees out in the world gets distilled into cartoons populated by fuzzy big-beaked creatures and captions that capture the essence of whatever tickled his perceptive fancy. What emerges in his cartoons is at once universal but also artisanal and localvore because of the settings, which reflect the terroir of his adopted state. Take a recent New Yorker cartoon whose locale was instantly recognizable to any patron of the Three Penny Taproom in Montpelier, from the layout to the bartender to the list of beers, which included ''Curtis India Pale Ale'' (his wife's name is Curtis) ''Onion River Saison'' and ''Camel's Hump Imperial Stout.''

''I kind of bring it home,'' he says simply. ''It's like a tribute to friends. It's capturing what I like about living here.''

It's entirely fitting, then, that on Feb. 27, Koren will be recognized as Vermont's Cartoonist Laureate at the Statehouse, and will give a talk at the Center for Cartoon Studies in White River Junction, which nominated him for the award. (Burlington's James Kolchalka was the first.)

Koren is honored and, typically, quick to riff humorously about the nomination, quipping that he may have to wear a neck brace. ''It's a weighty thing,'' he says of the honor and a potential swelled head. He then dredges up a quote from his literary mind, attributed to politician and UN ambassador Adlai Stevenson: ''Flattery is all right so long as you don't inhale.''

Truth is, there's little danger of flattery going to his head. Koren lives a well-grounded rural life in Brookfield: For 26 years he has served in the volunteer fire department, a job he loves, though he admits at 78, hauling hoses and pouring water on house fires, the ''real grunt work,'' is beyond his capacity today.

''I'm getting to be too old,'' he says.

When it comes to cartoons, few artists have a style as distinctive and easily recognizable as Koren's squiggly creatures, which have appeared all over Vermont, his donation to nonprofits and other organizations he deems worthy. Koren himself is small-beaked and not very large, with a bushy gray mustache, a frequent twinkle in his eye and a sprightly gait that reflects his exercise pursuits, which range seasonally from cross-country skiing to biking and paddling. He's famed for exercising daily, which he says refreshes his mind and his sense of the beauty in the world.

Imagine a lean, fit fatherly elf with a curmudgeonly tinge, and you're not far off (though it's more grandfatherly these days, thanks to grandkids from his first marriage). He now lives with his wife Curtis and an elderly Siamese feline named Catmandu.

Koren, who was raised in Mount Vernon, N.Y., was doing a teaching gig in graphic arts at Brown University when Vermont beckoned and he moved here permanently.

''I fell into this house in Brookfield from a year-old copy of Country Journal,'' he explains. He saw an ad for the house in the magazine, checked it out, fell in love with its village location, and, while living in New York City, bought the place in 1978 as a second home.

His ties to the Green Mountains go much further back, however, to his teens when he attended a summer theater camp in Waitsfield. The lush landscape and way of life was beguiling. ''Like a lot of kids, it stays with you,'' he says.

While Vermont offers fodder and settings for his cartoons, he admits to living a yin and yang existence. ''I've always been a New Yorker because I've spent so much of my life there. I'm at a heart a city guy, but I'm at heart a country guy,'' he says. And like many a Vermont country guy, he's now, in mid-February, admitting to being weary of winter as he lugs in firewood from the shed to keep his Vermont Castings stove going and his house warm.

Koren was drawn to the arts early. As a kid, he was inspired to draw by Al Capp's Li'l Abner, especially the simple lovable cartoon characters known as ''Shmoos.'' He began drawing cartoons in the mid-1950s at Columbia University for the college humor magazine, ''Jester,'' and then went on to study graphic arts in Paris and to receive an MFA from Pratt Institute. He was feeling tugged in several career directions—city planning, architecture, and graphic arts—when a ''kindly response'' from The New Yorker about looking at his cartoons put his future on course.

Koren landed in the magazine's pages in its literary heyday when the legendary William Shawn was editor. His illustrations and cartoons began appearing in The New York Times, Time and Newsweek magazines, as well as in ads for financial publications and Fortune 500 companies, and in a wide range of books. Always a freelance artist, for a number of years in the late 1990s he fell out of favor at the New Yorker (it was ''an unreliable family member'') but now seems to be back in the magazine's cartoon graces.

Koren is vague in describing how he came up with the creatures in his cartoons, which he roughs out and then refines in a lengthy process using pen and ink on large pieces of art paper measuring about two feet on each side. Those squiggly lined creatures of his just sort of happened, he says, explaining his style had a ''lax way of evolving'' and that he ''wasn't trying to do any of what I achieved.''

Koren draws in a spacious and cluttered studio at one end of his house, with two tables, stacks of books and walls pinned with illustrations, hand-written quotes and mementoes. Underneath one table is a bank of 40 drawers that hold decades of his life in pen and ink.

''I save everything. I'm a pack rat. I hate to throw things away,'' he admits.

As for his captions, which often nail smug and self-important people and modern life in general, he says he keeps his ears open ''like two giant antennas,'' especially when he is visiting New York City. At home he reads a lot and listens to radio (WDEV, VPR and NHPR.)

Does he ever think of retiring? ''Never!'' he says, recoiling at the idea. Besides, humanity is constantly providing inflated egos to puncture and trends to lampoon.

''It's part of my life. If I didn't do that, what would I do?'' he asks.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID RUBENSTEIN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in recent years, as difficult budget questions have beset the debate in Washington about how best to rein in spending while meeting our shared responsibilities to Americans, our communities, and the world, our Nation's treasures—from the monuments that dot the National Mall to the historic relics that line the halls of the Smithsonian museums—have had to shore up spending and face the reality that the government simply can't foot the bill the way it used to.

Tough decisions in Washington have led many with the means to increase their charitable giving, but none compare to the generosity of David Rubenstein, businessman, family man, philanthropist. He is also a friend to many. But most importantly, he is a friend to many of America's national treasures. I cherish his friendship.

You need not walk far in Washington to find Mr. Rubenstein's mark. I hear often from Vermonters who have come to Washington, for work or a family vacation, who visit such iconic places as the National Zoo, the Kennedy Center, the Library of Congress, and, of course, the Smithsonians. All bear some sign of Mr. Rubenstein's generosity.

The New York Times recently featured a profile of this man and what he calls ''patriotic giving.'' I ask unanimous consent that a copy of that profile be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordred to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, Feb. 21, 2014]

A BILLIONAIRE PHILANTHROPIST IN WASHINGTON WHO'S BIG ON ''PATRIOTIC GIVING''

(By Jennifer Steinhauer)

WASHINGTON.—The expansive reach of David M. Rubenstein into the public life of the nation's capital can be seen during a brief excursion from his downtown office at the Carlyle Group , the private equity firm that he co-founded and that made him a billionaire.

Begin across the street at the National Archives, the site of the new gallery, named after him, where Magna Carta, which he bought in 2007 for $23 million, is on permanent loan. Then head to the Library of Congress, and see the first map of the United States, also his, in the Great Hall.

Make your way to the earthquake-damaged Washington Monument, which will reopen this spring after a $15 million repair, half paid for by Mr. Rubenstein, then zip to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where his $75 million has bought, among other things, a new pipe organ. End up at the National Zoo, where baby Bao Bao frolics in the panda habitat Mr. Rubenstein endowed, part of a $7 million Smithsonian gift.

Over the years, Mr. Rubenstein, who has a fortune estimated at $3 billion, has made gifts to the usual array of universities, hospitals and cultural organizations beloved by wealthy donors. But he stands nearly alone in shoring up institutions generally under the purview of the federal government. About $200 million of the $300 million he has given away has been what he calls ''patriotic giving.''

''The United States cannot afford to do the things it used to do,'' Mr. Rubenstein said, ''and I think it would be a good thing if more people would say: 'My national zoo needs money, the archives need money. I think we're going to have to do more for them.' ''

And there is plenty more to do in a city that has not only suffered from cutbacks in federal spending but which historically has lacked both the wealth and the philanthropic traditions of places like New York. While there were wealthy and civic-minded men like Duncan Phillips and Eugene Meyer who left their mark on Washington in the last century, it was the federal government that built and maintained the parks and museums that in other cities donors endowed, according to Steven Pearlstein, a professor of public and international affairs at George Mason University and a columnist for The Washington Post. ''The federal government was the sugar daddy,'' he said.

For the most part, according to Mr. Pearlstein, Washington has been a place where the currency has been power more than money. In the past two decades, that has begun to change as government contracting, banking and the law have created a new wealthy class in the city and its suburbs, but no one has given his money away quite like Mr. Rubenstein.

''This kind of giving is starting to happen more often because governments are really suffering,'' said Stacy Palmer, the editor of The Chronicle of Philanthropy. ''But the extent of Rubenstein's giving sets him apart.''

Such giving, she said, is a subject of feverish debate in the philanthropy world, where many believe that private money should not permit government to abdicate responsibilities and in turn drain cash from food banks, hospitals and other services in need. There are ''concerns about whether it is a good idea for philanthropy to step in for government,'' Ms. Palmer said.

Mr. Rubenstein, 64, who first came to Washington to work in government, offers a simple explanation for what he has done: ''I felt I owed my country a lot. I also felt I owed the city a lot. I built my company here; I met my wife here.''

He grew up in modest means in Baltimore; his father sorted mail for the Postal Service and his mother was a homemaker. After college and law school, he worked in a New York law firm before getting a job on Capitol Hill for the Senate Judiciary Committee. In 1977, he joined the Carter administration, where he spent his days toiling over domestic policy as a White House aide, and met his wife, Alice Rogoff, who worked at the Office of Management and Budget. Newsweek once called him ''the White House workaholic.''

After his stint ended, Mr. Rubenstein took another corporate law job but reassessed and concluded that he was ''a mediocre lawyer.'' With some partners, he set out to found Carlyle, named after the hotel in New York City, quickly accruing a fortune in the world of leveraged buyouts.

Ten years ago, Mr. Rubenstein said, he began to consider his legacy, and after learning from some actuarial tables that white Jewish males were likely to live to 81, decided to start plowing a lot of his money—and his time—into philanthropic causes. ''There are other wonderful donors in Washington,'' said Michael M. Kaiser, president of the Kennedy Center, ''but it's the range of his giving and his collection of interests that is staggering.''

In choosing his beneficiaries, Mr. Rubenstein relies on his interests and his gut. He has a passion for American history and can lecture extemporaneously and at length about presidents, historic documents, the civil rights movement and beyond—and has no staff or foundation to vet requests.

He spends little time agonizing over a donation. ''To some extent when you've made the money, you feel you can give it away more rapidly,'' he said.

In January 2013, Curt Viebranz, the president of George Washington's Mount Vernon, took Mr. Rubenstein around the museum to show him how it had displayed some of his documents.

Over lunch, Mr. Viebranz recalled: ''I felt emboldened to ask him for a large gift, and much to my surprise and happiness, he made that $10 million gift in February. It was a remarkably efficient process.'' He added, ''It can take years of cultivating a donor to get a gift of that size.''

If you don't call Mr. Rubenstein, he might call you. If you do ''make the ask,'' expect to get an answer in weeks. While Mr. Rubenstein likes to see results—and despite his unassuming manner, is not averse to seeing his name on the doors of his beneficiaries—he does not use the complex success metrics of philanthropists like Eli Broad in Los Angeles. He tends not to check in, but if beneficiaries send an update, they hear back from him, no matter his time zone (he travels roughly 250 days a year).

The donations can be transformative. Mr. Rubenstein will endow the expansion of the Kennedy Center, which otherwise would have had to go to Congress for an appropriation. At Monticello, his $10 million gift allowed Leslie Greene Bowman, president of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, as she puts it, ''to return the mountaintop of Monticello to something Jefferson would have recognized in just a few years what I would venture to say would have taken at least a decade to accomplish.''

Mr. Rubenstein says he likes to apply the ''mother standard'' to giving. ''When I built Carlyle, my mother didn't call to say, 'I'm so proud,' he said. ''When I give a gift to some place of importance, she calls and says, 'I'm proud.' ''

REMEMBERING STRATTON ''STRATTY'' LINES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, today I remember a dear friend to Marcelle and me. Stratton ''Stratty'' Lines was for more than 40 years the proprietor of the Oasis Diner in Burlington, VT. Throughout its history, the diner was the center of many a political discussion over a hearty breakfast or tasty lunch and lots of laughs too. At the center of all the activity was Stratty, a first-generation American who, with his family, built a successful business in downtown Burlington. One of Stratty's sons, David, describes his father as the ''quintessential Vermonter.'' Stratty was that and so much more. He was a good family man and a hard worker who cared about working people.

I have many fond memories of the Oasis Diner, perhaps chief among them, eating breakfast there, celebrating with Stratty, and thanking voters the morning after I was first elected to the Senate in 1974. The diner was a popular stop among visitors to Vermont, including President Bill Clinton and Vice President Walter Mondale. During their visits and during my many trips to the diner, Stratty imparted the wisdom and common sense for which he was so well known and will be long remembered.

In memory of Stratty Lines, I ask that the article by Mike Donoghue of the Burlington Free Press, ''Oasis Diner proprietor Stratton 'Stratty' Lines remembered as quintessential Vermonter,'' be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Feb. 17, 2014]

OASIS DINER PROPRIETOR STRATTY LINES REMEMBERED AS ''QUINTESSENTIAL VERMONTER''

STRATTY LINES, LONGTIME OWNER OF BURLINGTON'S OASIS DINER, REMEMBERED FOR FOOD AND CONVERSATION

(By Mike Donoghue)

When Stratton ''Stratty'' Lines helped opened the Oasis Diner more than 40 years ago, coffee was a dime, and hamburgers cost 25 cents. Over the years, Lines served up food to the rich and the poor, the famous and the infamous.

His customers included local politicians and the president of the United States. The food was always good, and so was the conversation.

''I could learn more in 20 minutes with Stratty then I could with any polls,'' said U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D–Vt. ''Stratty heard everything. He knew what was gossip and what made sense.''

Lines often was spotted in a white short-order-cook hat trimmed in red, a white shirt and an apron over his pants. He also was a well-known Democratic supporter.

His health had been failing in recent months, one of his sons, David, said, and he was found dead of natural causes Friday at his Williston home. He was 84.

''He was the quintessential Vermonter, a first-generation American who established a small business that became an institution in this community,'' David Lines said.

The Oasis Diner was a popular breakfast and lunch spot just east of Church Street for

the movers and shakers of greater Burlington, but also for common folks. The draw was more than just the food—and more than just politics. Stratty Lines would follow sports, community events and all the other headlines of the day.

Leahy said a visit to Burlington was incomplete without a stop at the Oasis to learn the latest. When he offered condolences to David Lines, ''I said I loved going in there,'' Leahy recounted. ''I could learn more going in there by having breakfast.''

The Oasis remained a local institution until 2007, when the business was sold to become a New York-style delicatessen. The building now is home to El Cortijo.

Even in death, Lines sought to ensure people were properly fed. The Chittenden County Meals on Wheels, along with the Department of Veterans Affairs, are two organizations the family has suggested people make donations in Lines' memory instead of sending flowers.

Lines was born in Greece, graduated from Burlington High in 1947 and served as a military policeman in the U.S. armed forces in Germany from 1951–53.

Leahy, Vermont's senior senator and a former Chittenden County prosecutor, said lots of political debates were held in the 17-by-40-foot diner. He said Lines enjoyed hearing the hot-button topics of the day.

Lines was a gracious host, Leahy said, and always asked about his wife, Marcelle, and their children before anything else. Leahy said he believes he began frequenting the Oasis as a student at St. Michael's College, where he graduated in 1961, but he became more of a regular following law school and returning to Vermont in the mid '60s.

When he served as Chittenden County state's attorney, Leahy said, he would sometimes run names of potential jurors past Lines.

''He'd say, 'You might want to avoid that one,' or 'That would be a good one,'" Leahy said.

Lines was as popular with house-painters as he was with politicians. Alden Cadwell, 56, of Burlington said he always enjoyed his stops at the diner.

''Stratty was a big-hearted man with the biggest welcoming smile in Burlington,'' Cadwell said. ''He ran a diner that a regular patron came for the theater as much as the food.''

Cadwell said patrons got to hear cooks, waiters and other customers exchanging orders and quips.

''You did not leave the Oasis hungry or unentertained,'' Cadwell said.

Former federal Judge Albert W. Coffrin often could be seen sitting on a revolving stool at the counter. Coffrin once confided to a Burlington Free Press reporter that the Oasis was among his favorite stops.

Lawyers, bankers, merchants, the clergy and others also frequented the Burlington landmark.

Leahy said he brought President Bill Clinton into the diner during a visit to Burlington on July 31, 1995, to speak at the National Governors Association convention in South Burlington.

After a picture-taking event that included Clinton, Leahy, Lines and then-Gov. Howard Dean outside the diner, the nation's commander-in-chief stepped inside to enjoy lunch. The Oasis served up a hand-carved, overstuffed sandwich of fresh turkey on seeded rye, a Diet Coke and a slice of apple pie.

''Thanks for a great lunch,'' Clinton said when he departed.

''This was the highlight of my life, after the birth of my children,'' Lines would say later—especially significant, he added, for the son of Greek immigrants who arrived in the country without a dime.

His parents opened the diner in 1954, and Lines, who worked briefly at General Electric, soon joined the family business.

Lines would later say proudly he picked up the tab for President Clinton's meal.

''I don't think he ever got over that,'' Dean said Monday as he recalled the presidential visit.

''Stratty was an important guy. The ordinary person listened to him. He would rarely endorse somebody. He would say, So and so was a good guy,''' the former Vermont governor said.

''He would be more blatant once he got to know you better. He was the best of the old guard. He was socially conservative and business conservative,'' Dean said. ''He was very much for the working class. It was a family business, and his kids were working in there. It was kind of cool.''

Clinton wasn't the only brush with greatness for Lines.

A picture of him shaking hands with President Jimmy Carter also was displayed at the diner.

Vice President Walter Mondale stopped for pancakes shortly before the March 1980 primary. Tipper Gore, wife of Vice President Al Gore, enjoyed a slice of apple pie and ice cream in July 1999. A few other celebrity customers included Susan Sarandon, Tim Robbins, Lyle Lovett and Elliot Gould.

Lines was a longtime New York Yankees fan, but he said in 1977 that he converted to the Toronto Blue Jays after his veteran sportscasting friend Tom Cheek left WVMT–AM in Colchester and became the voice of the Blue Jays. Lines would visit Cheek during spring training and during the regular season.

Leahy said after he was elected to Congress, he would receive phone calls from the White House or from ambassadors and others while he was having breakfast at the Oasis. The ambassador from Russia called once.

A few days later, a political friend called the diner and, speaking with a put-on Russian accent, claimed to be a phone operator in Moscow. He confirmed with Lines that Leahy had taken the ambassador's call. The prankster told Lines the politician's call was made collect, and he owed $437.84, and then he hung up.

''Stratty loved to tell the story to everyone about the calls,'' Leahy said.

A celebration of Lines' life is planned for 4–7 p.m. Thursday at the Corbin and Palmer Funeral Home in Essex Junction. A brief service is planned at the funeral home at 10 a.m. Friday followed by a private interment.

Survivors include three sons, Jon, Gary and David, all in the Burlington area, and daughter Maria in California.

HOLZER BOOK BINDERY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in this age of digital readers and electronic books, the fine craft of bookbinding may seem to some archaic. On the contrary: the fine skills, patience, and dedication required to mend the pages of some of our greatest treasures have become all the more critical to preserving printed books—for classics printed decades or centuries ago, to cookbooks or children's books that have been in our families for generations.

At Holzer Book Bindery in Hinesburg, VT, Marianna Holzer, a third-generation bookbinder, is doing just that. Her shop is lined with leather bound books, many restored by her own hand, and hand operated cast-iron presses that help her with her handcraft. Her clients range from towns and municipalities, to personal collectors, and extend far beyond the mountains of Vermont.

In 1960, her father, 30 years her mother's senior, closed down his own bindery business in Boston to settle in Putney. Marianna was in high school when, years after her father passed away, her mother set up their own bindery in the basement. Here, Marianna learned the basics of bindery from her mother, using the storied tools of her father. After studying plant and soil science at the University of Vermont, Marianna found herself working at Four Seasons Garden Center in Williston before longing for something new. She ultimately returned to her bookbinding roots, joining a small bindery in Jericho before opening her own shop in 2008.

Marianna now works alongside her husband and folk musician, Rik Palieri, who assists her. Today, her challenges are even greater, as she battles multiple sclerosis. People send their books and heirlooms from around the country, seeking her dexterity and her expertise. For Marianna, it is her true love of preserving the past and the sentiment it brings others that makes her excel at her craft. She honors her family legacy by using her grandfather's logo as her own.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an article about this exceptional Vermonter who has dedicated her life to bringing joy to others by repairing those precious keepsakes we chose to pass on to our loved ones: ''At Holzer Book Bindery, Repairing Old Volumes Is a Labor of Love.'' [Seven Days, February 19, 2014]

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From Seven Days, Feb. 19, 2014]

AT HOLZER BOOK BINDERY, REPAIRING OLD VOLUMES IS A LABOR OF LOVE

(By Ethan De Seife)

Any author who gets a publishing deal these days knows the importance of e-books: Many readers now opt for pixels over ink. At Holzer Book Bindery in Hinesburg, though, the book's the thing. Owner Marianna Holzer, a third-generation bookbinder, appreciates books as objects. Her love for beautiful volumes and the increasingly rare craft of making them by hand is evident in her shop, located on the ground floor of her home. The place is filled with drawers of old metal typesetting letters, rolls of buckram and leather, and hand-operated, cast-iron book presses. Many of the hand tools that Holzer, 58, uses were inherited from her father, Albert, and grandfather, Ulrich, both of whom ran bookbinding shops in Boston. Both men were known not only for the high quality of their work, but for their personal investment in the books they repaired. Said Holzer, ''My mom used to say that people would bring their books to have them bound at the Holzer Bindery, but they'd have to wait until everybody in the family had read the book before they got it back.''

As a child, hanging around her father's shop, Holzer picked up many of the finer points of this specialized art. A career shift in the early 1980s brought her to Brown's

River Bindery, an operation that started in Jericho, then moved to Essex. Holzer worked her way up to various supervisory positions within the company.

When Brown's was reorganized and folded into a larger bindery called Kofile, Holzer decided the time was right to set up her own business. As it happened, her mother had recently moved out of the downstairs apartment in Holzer's home. That freed up the cozy space that, in 2008, Holzer turned into her own bindery. To honor her family's craft legacy, she still uses the logo from her grandfather's shop.

Though Holzer can and does create entire bound volumes from scratch, most of her projects are repairs, often on the beloved literary heirlooms of private clients. She can fix torn pages or create new ones for old books, trimming new folios, stitching them into signatures and assembling them into custom bindings.

During Seven Days' visit to the bindery, Holzer was performing surgery on some old, careworn, hardback copies of two of L. Frank Baum's Oz novels. The client who'd brought them wanted to resuscitate the books for sentimental reasons, and they needed a great deal of attention. Nearly all of both books' pages were brittle, tattered and detached from their bindings, from which the glue had long since cracked and flaked off. Still, Holzer estimated the job would take her just a couple of days of mending, and only an hour or two to sew the pages back together.

Holzer has multiple sclerosis, which can make such detailed work difficult, so she's glad, she said, to have assistance from her husband, folk musician Rik Palieri. In between his concert tours, Palieri helps out on the larger binding orders, including the municipal records of a number of Vermont towns. (Holzer is reluctant to say which ones.)

Palieri professed admiration for the kind of beautiful, hand-bound books that Holzer Bindery produces. The couple has preserved and bound their own cherished keepsakes, such as an original program from one of Buffalo Bill's Wild West shows. Palieri's own daily journal is a huge, green, handcrafted volume that would look right at home on the shelves of a city planning office.

Repair jobs come into the bindery in what Holzer described as a ''steady but not overwhelming supply.'' Every one is different, and, she said, without first inspecting the book, it's difficult to estimate the cost of the repairs. Prices per piece range from about $100 to more than $1,000.

''It will depend on what needs to be done, what the customer wants, if we are trying to save all the original material or make a new cover, and then that will depend on whether it is in leather or imitation leather,'' Holzer explained.

Demonstrating her craft to a visitor, Holzer smiled and laughed frequently. She took particular delight in the gold stamper, with which she embosses books' spines and covers with shiny letters and designs. With this device, Holzer can also turn strips of scrap leather into personalized bookmarks, mementos that she gives visitors to the bindery.

Holzer's shop—along with the handful of other small bookbinders scattered around the state—embodies the spirit of quality artisanship associated with Vermont. Case in point: Holzer mentioned a client from Houston, Texas, for whom she bound a memorial Bible. Its owner had found Holzer Bindery online and chosen the company specifically because of its Vermont location, she said; to him, this guaranteed careful craft.

Over cups of tea served beneath the cuckoo clock in her kitchen, Holzer talked with Seven Days about the fine art of fine books.

SEVEN DAYS: How did you get started in the bookbinding business?

MARIANNA HOLZER: My father was 70 when I was born—30 years older than my mother. I was pretty young when [his bindery] was still going in Boston. He closed the business in 1960, when he was 80, and moved to southern Vermont, to Putney. He passed away when I was 11, and my mom set up a little bindery later, when I was in high school, in the basement of our house. She taught me a few basic things.

I went to UVM, [where I] studied plant and soil science. I got a job at Four Seasons Garden Center [in Williston]. I kind of got sick of that, and found out that there was this small bindery [Brown's River Bindery] in Jericho, and went to see them. That's how it began.

SD: What are all these tools used for?

MH: The board shears are basically a huge paper cutter; the guillotine, which needs to be super-sharp, is for trimming the edges of a book's pages. I use a lot of mending tissue, which is a Japanese tissue used to fix rips and tears. The rounding or backing hammer—one of my father's tools—I use for rounding a book's spine. One of my favorite things to do is the gold stamping, which presses down on a thin piece of Mylar covered with 22-carat gold. That's how you decorate a binding, letter by letter.

SD: What services do you offer?

MH: One thing I do here is deacidify paper. Anything before the mid-1800s was printed on rag paper, which holds up quite well. Newer paper is made with wood pulp, and we didn't know until more recently how acidic it was. It gets really brittle and cracks when you turn the pages. So we can deacidify the paper, and it'll stop the progression of [the decay]—though it won't bring it back [to its original condition].

SD: Bookbinding is such a niche field. What challenges does your business face?

MH: It seems to me, in some ways, books are becoming more precious as people realize they have certain books that they want to preserve and pass on. Bibles are one thing. It's cheaper to buy a new one, but [the owner has] written all over it. Children's books—people have grown up with a book. And cookbooks! People have written in them, or they have their mother's cookbook. The newer versions they don't like as much.

These days, newer bindings are single sheets that are just glued in. When you open them up, they sometimes crack and fall apart. And those are kind of hard to fix, because they don't have enough of the margin that's necessary to drill the holes for stitching. Older books tend to be in better shape.

SD: How does having MS affect your work as a binder?

MH: I just get really tired sometimes. It's almost like I'm walking through mud or something. It's a big effort to do things. It's also dexterity, fine motor control.

SD: Are you concerned about the new all-in-one machines that can print a book from a digital file and then bind it?

MH: Not particularly. You see a book, and you never think what goes into making it. They [bind books] by machine nowadays. But if you want to repair a book, you can't do it by machine.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND LEONARD ROBINSON

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, I wish to speak about one of Wyoming's greatest World War II heroes, the Rev. Leonard Robinson. Leonard is a special man whose sacrifice speaks louder than his words.

In 1942, less than 1 year after shipping out from Fort Bliss, TX, Robinson found himself among 75,000 American and Filipino soldiers and civilians surrendered to the Imperial Japanese Army. He was one of the fortunate to survive the barbaric 65 mile, 5-day Bataan Death March. Those who were unable to keep up with the march were either beaten or shot by Japanese soldiers.

Robinson was held as a prisoner of war for almost 3½ years. He survived the Bataan Death March, disease, malnutrition, slave labor and torture through his faith in God. Both spiritually and physically, Reverend Robinson credits the Bible with saving his life during his time as a prisoner of war. It is through his faith that he persevered through one of the greatest atrocities committed against our soldiers.

As a prisoner of war, Leonard would often recite Psalm 23 to get him through his struggle. Rev. Leonard Robinson's life has been a journey of war, suffering, hope and peace. Leonard embraced faith in his darkest hours, showed a commitment to duty when all else was lost, and held dear to the memory of his brothers in arms who did not return. In his battered billfold, Leonard kept a roster of his unit and the names of the fallen soldiers. He is a living testament to the often overlooked sacrifices that make our men and women in uniform America's greatest treasure.

Today, Reverend Robinson is being honored at the Casper Area Chamber of Commerce ''Hiring a Hero'' luncheon. The event's goal is to promote veteran employment through recognizing our service men and women who have triumphed over adversity with a proven ability to overcome challenges and obstacles through strength and determination. I do not know of a better example than my friend and my surgical patient Rev. Leonard Robinson. He epitomizes the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform.

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL SECURITY ACT

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I have spoken on the floor of this body on a number of occasions about the impending retirement crisis facing this country. I know from my constituents that the dream of a secure retirement is growing fainter and fainter. In fact, the retirement income deficit—meaning, difference between what people have saved for retirement and what they should have at this point—is a staggering $6.6 trillion and growing. Today, half of Americans have less than $10,000 in savings, and only 14 percent are ''very confident'' they will have enough money for a comfortable retirement.

I am deeply concerned by these statistics. That is why, in 2013, I introduced legislation to tackle this challenge head on. My legislation, S. 567 the Strengthening Social Security Act

of 2013, would improve the most efficient, most effective retirement program we have—Social Security—in three ways. First, it would increase benefits by about $65 per month for all beneficiaries. Second, it would ensure that annual cost of living adjustments more accurately reflect the cost of living experienced by seniors by adopting the CPI-E. And, finally, it would remove the wage cap so that the payroll tax applies fairly to every dollar of wages. According to the Social Security actuaries, my proposal would increase benefits for current and future beneficiaries while also extending the life of the Social Security Trust Fund through 2049.

Recently, an organization that I have worked closely with for many years, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security & Medicare, launched a campaign in support of a proposal that would boost Social Security benefits, including my legislation. I deeply appreciate the support of the national committee, and commend them for their work to strengthen and expand Social Security. I look forward to continuing to work with them, and other supportive organizations, to confront our Nation's retirement crisis. Strengthening and expanding Social Security is the crucial first step.

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS IN CHINA

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, today I would like to draw attention to a disturbing trend impacting the work of journalists in China.

On January 30, 2014, New York Times reporter Austin Ramzy was forced to leave China due to processing delays for his press credentials. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated event. In 2013, Reporters Without Borders ranked China 173rd out of 179 countries in terms of press freedoms. Over the past year, we have seen China increase efforts to curb the work of foreign news organizations, including extended delays in processing journalist visas, restrictions on access to ''sensitive'' locations and individuals, pressure on local staff, blocked Web sites, and reports of cyber hacking of media organizations.

To call attention to this suppression, I, as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, along with subcommittee ranking member MARCO RUBIO, Senate Foreign Relations chairman BOB MENENDEZ, and ranking member BOB CORKER, introduced S. Res. 361. This resolution urges the People's Republic of China to take meaningful steps to improve freedom of expression in China as fitting of a responsible international stakeholder.

The ongoing crackdown on journalists and members of the press reporting in China is of grave concern to me. A country that engages in routine censorship and online blocking; harassment, reprisals, and detention of journalists; and visa delays or denials for journalists not only fails its own people but also fails the international community. A vibrant and free press instills trust in one's government, creates a more transparent environment for business investments, develops an engaged community, and builds legitimacy as a secure, global leader. We expect our partners to strive for these standards.

As we look to rebalance our policy toward the Asia-Pacific region, the United States has a responsibility to promote respect for universal human rights. We urge President Obama to use all appropriate tools to improve and promote freedom of the press in China.

I would like to thank my colleagues for joining me in support of press freedom in China.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DR. MOHAMMAD YOUSAF

• Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I wish to recognize one of West Virginia's finest cardiologists, Dr. Mohammad Yousaf, on receiving the 2013 Heart of Gold Award, which was presented by the West Virginia American Heart Association on February 23, 2013. There is truly no one more qualified, more compassionate or more devoted than Dr. Yousaf, who has been practicing in West Virginia for more than 20 years.

A native of Pakistan, Dr. Yousaf made his way to West Virginia to complete his residency at Marshall University. During his fellowship, he was assigned rotations in our beautiful State's capital, Charleston. Thankfully, he never left and his unwavering commitment to the cardiology field at South Charleston Cardiology, where he continues to practice today, has consistently saved West Virginian lives across our State.

With the help of Dr. Yousaf's momentous contributions and medical expertise, the quality of West Virginia's medical community has strengthened throughout the years and the health and well-being of the people of West Virginia continue to improve.

There are a myriad of doctors across this Nation that diagnose and treat patients every day. However, what distinguishes a good doctor from a great doctor starts and stops with patient care. Dr. Yousaf always puts his patients first and takes the time to build the trust and confidence necessary that leads to positive and long-lasting doctor-patient relationships. Long days and sleepless nights never obstruct from the compassion and dedication Dr. Yousaf devotes to each one of his patients.

Dr. Yousaf is also no stranger to prestigious awards, including the Distinguished West Virginian award, which was created to honor those who have contributed significantly to West Virginia and those who have brought positive attention to our great State. After more than two decades practicing as a cardiologist in the Mountain State, it is unquestionable that his integrity and work ethic know no bounds. And today, I am proud to commemorate the success of such a wonderful person and such a talented physician.

It is fitting that Dr. Yousaf was presented with the Heart of Gold Award last year, for he once described ''the personal satisfaction you get'' as a physician who has the means and opportunities to save lives every day. So today, I congratulate a remarkably intelligent and gifted cardiologist on receiving such an esteemed honor. I know he will continue to save lives in the great state of West Virginia for years to come.•

REMEMBERING MICHAEL A. STEPOVICH

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I wish to give tribute to Alaska's last Territorial Governor, Michael A. Stepovich, who unfortunately died early on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, at the age of 94.

Mr. Stepovich was a war veteran, a legislator, a local government leader, the first Governor of the Territory born in Alaska and the last prior to statehood in 1957 and 1958, a lawyer, a civic leader, businessman and a true statesman. He also was a good man, and great friend to my entire family. When my family moved to Fairbanks, AK in the early 1970s, Mike and his wife Mathilda and their children were our earliest and closest friends. The Stepovics raised a large and loving family, and while most Alaskans will remember Mike as an Alaskan statesman, I will always think of him first as a true family man.

Michael was born in Fairbanks on March 12, 1919, the son of Michael A. and Olga S. Stepovich. He graduated in 1940 from Gonzaga University—which in 1966 honored him with the DeSmet medal for being an ''outstanding graduate and layman.'' He earned a law degree from Notre Dame in 1943, and after service in the Navy, he completed postgraduate work at Santa Clara College in 1946.

Stepovich opened a private law practice in Fairbanks in 1948, serving as the city attorney of Fairbanks from 1950 to 1952, as a delegate to the Territorial House of Representatives from 1951–1953 and in the Territorial Senate from 1953–1957. While in the Senate he served as minority leader and was a strong supporter of statehood. He worked tirelessly on the 1956 referendum for statehood. President Dwight Eisenhower appointed Stepovich to be Territorial Governor after Alaskans went to the ballot box in support of joining the Union. He was to be Alaska's last Territorial Governor—within a year Congress would approve Alaska as the 49th State.

After statehood, Governor Stepovich turned his attention to representing Alaska in the U.S. Senate. He lost his bid in 1958 to be one of Alaska's first Senators to Ernest Gruening, who had served in Washington as one of Alaska's fir two ''shadow'' Senators since 1956. Stepovich later ran and lost races to be Governor, first against William A. Egan and later against Walter Hickel. But his defeats did not diminish his interest in or dedication to Alaska. And he remained especially committed to Fairbanks and the rest of the Interior region.

From chairing the Fairbanks Planning and Zoning Committee in 1952 and 1953, through the 1980s, Mike Stepovich was always ready to serve to better Alaska. He was active in the Pioneers of Alaska, the Elks, Eagles, American Legion and the Tanana Valley Bar Association. And that was not always easy given that he was a devoted family man to his wife Matilda and 13 children: Antonia, Maria Theresa, Michael, Peter, Christopher, Dominic, Theodore John, Nicholas Vincent, James, Laura, Nada, Andrea and Melissa. All 13 of the Stepovich children were able to be together with Mike before he passed.

While I could tell many stories about Mike, let me just say to my fellow Senators that Mike Stepovich was a man who would have given the shirt off his back to help a neighbor in need. He was one of the most honorable, decent, and wise men I have had the distinct honor to know in my life. I can only offer my sincere condolences to his family upon his death, just a month shy of his 95th birthday.

Alaska is a much better place because of Mike Stepovich. Those of us who were lucky enough to know him understand how great a loss this is for Alaska. We will always remember his efforts that helped make Alaska, and his hometown of Fairbanks, what it is today.●

REMEMBERING ELIZABETH AND ROY PERATROVICH

● Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I wish to honor Elizabeth Peratrovich, her husband Roy Peratrovich, and their relentless pursuit of equal civil rights in the territory of Alaska. Elizabeth and Roy lived and worked long before Alaska became a State and still longer before the United States passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. February 16, 2014 marked the 25th year Alaskans celebrated Elizabeth and the passage of the Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act of 1945. I would like to take a moment today, to once again, share the Peratroviches' story and reflect on the legacy of their work.

Elizabeth, a member of the Lukaaxádi clan, in the Raven moiety of the Tlingit tribe, was born on Independence Day in Petersburg, AK in 1911. One year later, Alaska gained a territorial legislature in Juneau made up of 8 senators and 16 representatives, none of whom were Alaska Native. In the same year a group of Alaska Natives from Southeast formed the Alaska Native Brotherhood to advocate for a right to U.S. citizenship for Alaska Natives. In 1915, Alaska Native women came together and established the Alaska Native Sisterhood to work alongside the brotherhood. Although Elizabeth was very young for the creation of these bodies, each came to play a great role in her fight for equal rights.

Many Americans are familiar with the history of discrimination and presence of Jim Crow laws at this time in the South. Probably fewer Americans are familiar with the existence of similar discrimination towards Alaska Natives. In Juneau, Alaskan Natives were restricted to purchasing homes in only certain parts of town and their children restricted to segregated Indian schools. Local business displayed signs in their store fronts reading, ''No Natives Allowed,'' ''We cater to white trade only,'' or ''No Dogs, No Natives'' and restaurant signs read, ''Meals at all hours—All white help.'' The U.S. Congress granted citizenship to Native Americans in 1924, yet signs like these and the discrimination they perpetrated endured.

Elizabeth grew up and attended school in Petersburg, Sitka and Ketchikan. After graduating she continued her education at the Western College of Education in Bellingham, WA. In 1931, Elizabeth married Roy Peratrovich, a fellow Western College student and Tlingit from Klawock, AK. In 1940, Roy was elected to be the Alaska Native Brotherhood's camp president and the following year Elizabeth was elected grand president of the Alaska Native Sisterhood.

Together, with their young family, the Peratroviches moved to Juneau, only to experience discrimination against Alaska Natives first-hand. Elizabeth and Roy picked out a home together and tried to purchase it, but once the owners realized that the Peratroviches were Alaska Native, they would not sell. Their children felt unwelcome at school. Their close family friend, Henrietta Newton, who was not Alaska Native herself but married an Alaska Native man, was told by a local beauty parlor, ''I'm sorry we don't cater to Indian trade.'' When an Alaska Native child had an altercation with the law, their local newspaper published it as front page news. Discrimination towards Alaska Natives remained prevalent. On December 30, 1941, in their capacities as president and grand president of the Alaska Native Brother and Sisterhoods, Roy and Elizabeth wrote a letter to Ernest Gruening, then Governor of the Territory of Alaska. The letter drew attention to the discrepancy between Alaska Natives paying taxes for a public school system from which their children were excluded and also between Alaska Native men fighting in World War II, who upon return were denied rights that other locals enjoyed. Thus began their public pursuit of equal rights for all people in Alaska.

Elizabeth began to call upon her friends and family to involve themselves in the anti-discrimination movement. She recruited women to meet with a Senator from Nome in order to express to him what it felt like to be discriminated against, left out of the United Service Organization, and forced to read signs in local businesses barring them from entry. Elizabeth and Roy met with Governor Gruening to strategize their movement, and then traveled around Native communities bringing with them sample anti-discrimination legislation from the lower 48. In 1943, State Senator Norman Walker introduced an act that would provide full and equal accommodations to all people within the Territory of Alaska. The vote was defeated, but the Peratroviches were not.

In 1945, the antidiscrimination bill was reintroduced. It passed the house and moved to the senate. The gallery was full, the doors were open and spectators filled the halls outside. Once on the senate floor, the debate began. As senators stood to speak, Elizabeth, along with many other community members listened. They listened as one Senator rose to say:

> Far from being brought closer together, which will result from this bill, the races should be kept further apart. Who are these people, barely out of savagery, who want to associate with us whites with 5,000 years of recorded civilization behind us?

Elizabeth looked on as another senator claimed, ''Mixed breeds are the source of trouble, it is they only who wish to associate with the whites,'' and as a church leader declared that it would take at least 30 years before Alaska Natives were equal to white men, Roy rose to speak on behalf of the bill noting that Governor Gruening recognized discrimination in Alaska. He addressed the legislature with these words, ''Either you are for discrimination or you are against it accordingly as you vote on this bill.''

Once debate on the bill concluded, the public was given a chance to express their views in front of the legislature and a crowd gathered that day. Given this chance, Elizabeth took it. Once on the senate floor, Elizabeth sat next to the president of the senate, where she addressed the predominantly white and all-male body of legislators. ''I would not have expected that I, who am barely out of savagery, would have to remind gentlemen with five thousand years of recorded civilization behind them of our Bill of Rights.''

When asked if she thought the bill would eliminate discrimination, Elizabeth replied:

> Do your laws against larceny and even murder prevent those crimes? No law will eliminate crimes but at least you as legislators can assert to the world that you recognize the evil of the present situation and speak your intent to help us overcome discrimination.

As Elizabeth finished speaking, the gallery broke out in applause. The senate voted and passed the anti-discrimination bill by a vote of 11 to 5. On February 16, 1945, Elizabeth earned her spot as our fighter with velvet gloves, and as she's respectfully remembered in our State, Alaska's Martin Luther King.●

REMEMBERING AMY S. PERKINS

● Ms. AYOTTE. Madam President, I wish to celebrate the life and legacy of a great New Hampshire public servant—State representative Amy S. Perkins of Seabrook.

I was deeply saddened to learn of Amy's passing earlier this week. At age 43, she was taken from us far too soon. My heart is broken for her family and friends, as well as her constituents in Seabrook.

Amy represented the very best of New Hampshire's ''citizen legislature.'' She and her husband Koko, also a State representative, represented Seabrook together at the State House while also giving back to their beloved community in so many other ways.

Amy was active in her church in Seabrook and was a member of the Raymond E. Walton American Legion Post 70 Women's Auxiliary. Koko, who continues to serve in the legislature, is the deputy chief at the Seabrook Fire Department. As a husband and wife team, they committed themselves to giving back to others—embodying New Hampshire's distinctive spirit of community.

In addition to her public duties, Amy was also a devoted mother who leaves behind two children—her son Daumanic Fucile and her daughter Katelyn Perkins. She was also a daughter and a sister—and I extend my deepest sympathy to the family members who are mourning her loss.

Amy was a leader who refused to sit on the sidelines. She is someone who cared deeply about her town and her State, and she selflessly stepped up to serve. Amy leaves behind a legacy of service that I know her husband Koko will carry on—and her children will always be able to look to the example she set as a model of how to give back to others.

Amy Perkins will be deeply missed by those whose lives she touched. Her family and many friends will remain in my thoughts and prayers.●

RECOGNIZING CAMILLE BECKMAN

● Mr. RISCH. Madam President, countless American businesses find their start in the living rooms, backyards, and garages of aspiring entrepreneurs. Harnessing individual creativity and work ethic, a hobby can grow into a lasting enterprise. Today I wish to recognize and commend the Camille Beckman corporation, a company from my home State of Idaho whose hard work and dedication to quality has seen growth and prosperity in a unique and thriving market.

Susan Beckman Roghani learned the value of homemade goods from her mother, who sold soaps, creams, and original art at local events. In 1986, Susan built on the work of her mother and founded the Camille Beckman cosmetics brand in Boise, ID, which uses wholesome ingredients and natural herbs to produce high-quality creams and lotions. From production and ingredients to design and marketing, every aspect of the Camille Beckman brand is produced from American-made materials and the company consistently exceeds the Federal Trade Commission's Made in the USA standard.

After relocating in 2001 to a larger facility in Eagle, ID, Camille Beckman continued to grow and expand. Today, Camille Beckman's handcrafted luxury body products are sold in over 10,000 locations across the country, along with many retailers globally. Their factory headquarters prides itself on being an energy-efficient, state-of-the-art, architecturally beautiful 105,000 square foot facility that, through their ''reduce and recycle'' production policies, consumes only around 30 percent of energy used by similarly sized facilities.

The company's positive and energetic culture has contributed tremendously to Camille Beckman's continued success. Thanks to an ongoing commitment to its workers, Camille Beckman has many employees that have been with the company since its formative years. In 1995, the Camille Beckman Foundation was formed as a way to help charities at the local, national, and international levels. From food banks to orphanages to medical care, the foundation gives money to dozens of charities in Idaho and across the world.

I congratulate Camille Beckman on their success, continued growth, and exemplary reputation for quality. Camille Beckman represents the best aspects of American craftsmanship and is a credit to both Idaho and the Nation.●

REPORT ON THE CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO CUBA AND OF THE EMERGENCY AUTHORITY RELATING TO THE REGULATION OF THE ANCHORAGE AND MOVEMENT OF VESSELS—PM 30

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States, together with an accompanying report; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs:

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within 90 days prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency declared on March 1, 1996, with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2014.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, *February 25, 2014.*

EXECUTIVE AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were laid before the Senate, together with accompanying papers, reports, and documents, and were referred as indicated:

EC–4706. A communication from the Secretary of the Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Commission Reporting Requirements Under Section 7A of the Clayton Act, 15 U.S.C. Section 18a'' received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 10, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4707. A communication from the Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Tanner Crab Area Closure in the Gulf of Alaska and Gear Modification Requirements for the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea Groundfish Fisheries'' (RIN0648–BB76) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4708. A communication from the Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Pacific Island Fisheries; 2014 Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures'' (RIN0648–XC954) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 7, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4709. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, an annual report relative to accomplishments made under the Airport Improvement Program for fiscal year 2010; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4710. A communication from the Secretary of the Federal Trade Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Commission Reporting Requirements Under Section 8 of the Clayton Act, 15 U.S.C. Section 19(a)(5)'' received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 10, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4711. A communication from the Attorney-Advisor, Office of the Secretary, Department of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to a vacancy in the position of Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, Department of Transportation, received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4712. A communication from the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory

Programs, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, Department of Commerce, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Fisheries Off West Coast States; Coastal Pelagic Species Fisheries; Annual Specifications'' (RIN0648–XC772) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4713. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Television Broadcasting Services; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma'' (MB Docket No. 13–302, DA 14–130) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4714. A communication from the Chief of Staff, Media Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Television Broadcasting Services; Birmingham, Alabama'' (MB Docket No. 13–261, DA 14–131) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4715. A communication from the Secretary of Transportation, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to all complaints received by air carriers alleging discrimination on the basis of disability; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

EC–4716. A communication from the Deputy Secretary of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Treatment of Certain Collateralized Debt Obligations Backed Primarily by Trust Preferred Securities With Regard to Prohibitions and Restrictions on Certain Interests in, and Relationships With, Hedge Funds and Private Equity Funds'' (RIN3038–AE13) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 18, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4717. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Suspension of Community Eligibility'' ((44 CFR Part 64) (Docket No. FEMA–2013–0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4718. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Flood Elevation Determinations'' ((44 CFR Part 67) (Docket No. FEMA–2013–0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4719. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Flood Elevation Determinations'' ((44 CFR Part 67) (Docket No. FEMA–2013–0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4720. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Flood Elevation Determinations'' ((44 CFR Part 67) (Docket No. FEMA–2013–0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4721. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Flood Elevation Determinations'' ((44 CFR Part 67) (Docket No. FEMA–2013–0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4722. A communication from the Chairman and President of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to transactions involving U.S. exports to Angola; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4723. A communication from the Chairman and President of the Export-Import Bank, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to transactions involving U.S. exports to Mexico; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4724. A communication from the Secretary of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, a six-month periodic report on the national emergency with respect to Iran as declared in Executive Order 12957 of March 15, 1995; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4725. A communication from the Chief Counsel, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Final Flood Elevation Determinations'' ((44 CFR Part 67) (Docket No. FEMA–2013–0002)) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4726. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the continuation of the national emergency with respect to Libya declared in Executive Order 13566; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4727. A communication from the Director, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, Department of the Treasury, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Anti-Money Laundering Program and Suspicious Activity Report Filing Requirements for Housing Government Sponsored Enterprises'' (RIN1506–AB14) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 20, 2014; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

EC–4728. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Irish Potatoes Grown in Modoc and Siskiyou Counties, California, and in All Counties in Oregon, Except Malheur County; Termination of Marketing Order No. 947'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0036; FV13–947–1 FR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4729. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Tomatoes Grown in Florida; Increased Assessment Rate'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0076; FV13–966–1 FR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4730. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Irish Potatoes Grown in Colorado; Decreased Assessment Rate for Area No. 2'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0072; FV13–948–2 FIR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4731. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Paper and Paper-Based Packaging Promotion, Research and Information Order'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–11–0069 FR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4732. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Irish Potatoes Grown in Washington and Imported Potatoes; Modification of the Handling Regulations, Reporting Requirements, and Import Regulations for Red Types of Potatoes'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0068; FV13–946–3 IR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4733. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Irish Potatoes Grown in Colorado; Decreased Assessment Rate for Area No. 2'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0072; FV13–13–948–2 IR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4734. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Softwood Lumber Research, Promotion, Consumer Education and Industry Information Order; Changes to the Membership of the Softwood Lumber Board'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0038) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4735. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Cotton and Tobacco Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Cotton Futures Classification: Optional Classification Procedure'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0043) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4736. A communication from the Associate Administrator of the Fruit and Vegetable Programs, Agricultural Marketing Service, Department of Agriculture, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Oranges, Grapefruit, Tangerines, and Tangelos Grown in Florida; Increased Assessment Rate'' (Docket No. AMS–FV–13–0074; FV13–905–3 FR) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 24, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4737. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''GS-omega/kappa-Hxtx-Hv1a; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance''

(FRL No. 9904–92) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 20, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4738. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''N-(n-octyl)-2-pyrrolidone; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance'' (FRL No. 9906–17) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 20, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4739. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Alkyl Alcohol Alkoxylate Phosphate and Sulfate Derivatives; Exemption from the Requirement of a Tolerance'' (FRL No. 9906–24) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 20, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4740. A communication from the Director of the Regulatory Management Division, Environmental Protection Agency, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Saflufenacil; Pesticide Tolerances'' (FRL No. 9905–87) received during adjournment of the Senate in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 20, 2014; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

EC–4741. A communication from the Assistant General Counsel for Legislation, Regulation and Energy Efficiency, Department of Energy, transmitting, pursuant to law, the report of a rule entitled ''Energy Conservation Program: Energy Conservation Standards for Metal Halide Lamp Fixtures'' (RIN1904–AC00) received in the Office of the President of the Senate on February 12, 2014; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. HARKIN, from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute:

S. 1086. A bill to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 113–138).

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

The following bills and joint resolutions were introduced, read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

By Mr. THUNE:

S. 2038. A bill to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CORNYN:

S. 2039. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require that ITIN applicants submit their application in person at taxpayer assistance centers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

By Mr. CRAPO (for himself and Mr. RISCH):

S. 2040. A bill to exchange trust and fee land to resolve land disputes created by the realignment of the Blackfoot River along the boundary of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

By Mr. CRAPO (for himself and Mr. RISCH):

S. 2041. A bill to repeal the Act of May 31, 1918, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. RUBIO):

S. Con. Res. 32. A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding the need for investigation and prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, whether committed by officials of the Government of Syria, or members of other groups involved in civil war in Syria, and calling on the President to direct the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations to use the voice and vote of the United States to immediately promote the establishment of a Syrian war crimes tribunal, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 149

At the request of Ms. KLOBUCHAR, the name of the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 149, a bill to provide effective criminal prosecutions for certain identity thefts, and for other purposes.

S. 161

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 161, a bill to extend the Federal recognition to the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana, and for other purposes.

S. 375

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) was added as a cosponsor of S. 375, a bill to require Senate candidates to file designations, statements, and reports in electronic form.

S. 1011

At the request of Mr. JOHANNS, the names of the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR) and the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) were added as cosponsors of S. 1011, a bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the centennial of Boys Town, and for other purposes.

S. 1174

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from Rhode Island (Mr. REED) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1174, a bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

S. 1187

At the request of Ms. STABENOW, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1187, a bill to prevent homeowners from being forced to pay taxes on forgiven mortgage loan debt.

S. 1395

At the request of Mr. LEAHY, the name of the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1395, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend and expand the charitable deduction for contributions of food inventory.

S. 1397

At the request of Mr. PORTMAN, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1397, a bill to improve the efficiency, management, and interagency coordination of the Federal permitting process through reforms overseen by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and for other purposes.

S. 1404

At the request of Mr. COBURN, the name of the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1404, a bill to prohibit the consideration of any bill by Congress unless the authority provided by the Constitution of the United States for the legislation can be determined and is clearly specified.

S. 1406

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the names of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. JOHANNS) were added as cosponsors of S. 1406, a bill to amend the Horse Protection Act to designate additional unlawful acts under the Act, strengthen penalties for violations of the Act, improve Department of Agriculture enforcement of the Act, and for other purposes.

S. 1456

At the request of Ms. AYOTTE, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1456, a bill to award the Congressional Gold Medal to Shimon Peres.

S. 1458

At the request of Mr. HOEVEN, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1458, a bill to establish the Daniel Webster Congressional Clerkship Program.

S. 1459

At the request of Mr. KIRK, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1459, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to prohibit the transportation of horses in interstate transportation in a motor vehicle containing 2 or more levels stacked on top of one another.

S. 1468

At the request of Mr. COONS, his name was added as a cosponsor of S. 1468, a bill to require the Secretary of Commerce to establish the Network for Manufacturing Innovation and for other purposes.

S. 1500

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Alabama

(Mr. SESSIONS) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1500, a bill to declare the November 5, 2009, attack at Fort Hood, Texas, a terrorist attack, and to ensure that the victims of the attack and their families receive the same honors and benefits as those Americans who have been killed or wounded in a combat zone overseas and their families.

S. 1591

At the request of Mrs. HAGAN, the name of the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1591, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow the work opportunity credit to small businesses which hire individuals who are members of the Ready Reserve or National Guard, and for other purposes.

S. 1659

At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the name of the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1659, a bill to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 regarding proprietary institutions of higher education in order to protect students and taxpayers.

S. 1691

At the request of Mr. TESTER, the name of the Senator from North Dakota (Ms. HEITKAMP) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1691, a bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to improve the security of the United States border and to provide for reforms and rates of pay for border patrol agents.

S. 1738

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the name of the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. JOHNSON) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1738, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

S. 1828

At the request of Mr. DONNELLY, the name of the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1828, a bill to amend the Truth in Lending Act to modify the definitions of a mortgage originator and a high-cost mortgage.

S. 1908

At the request of Mr. CORNYN, the names of the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS) and the Senator from Utah (Mr. HATCH) were added as cosponsors of S. 1908, a bill to allow reciprocity for the carrying of certain concealed firearms.

S. 1956

At the request of Mr. SCHATZ, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1956, a bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to review the discharge characterization of former members of the Armed Forces who were discharged by reason of the sexual orientation of the member, and for other purposes.

S. 1982

At the request of Mr. SANDERS, the names of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) and the Senator from Montana (Mr. WALSH) were added as cosponsors of S. 1982, a bill to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes.

S. 1999

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the name of the Senator from Minnesota (Mr. FRANKEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 1999, a bill to amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to require the consent of parties to contracts for the use of arbitration to resolve controversies arising under the contracts and subject to provisions of such Act and to preserve the rights of servicemembers to bring class actions under such Act, and for other purposes.

S. 2021

At the request of Ms. CANTWELL, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2021, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to modify the incentives for the production of biodiesel.

S. 2036

At the request of Mr. HARKIN, the name of the Senator from New Hampshire (Ms. AYOTTE) was withdrawn as a cosponsor of S. 2036, a bill to protect all school children against harmful and life-threatening seclusion and restraint practices.

S. CON. RES. 7

At the request of Mr. MORAN, the name of the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. MCCONNELL) was added as a cosponsor of S. Con. Res. 7, a concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding conditions for the United States becoming a signatory to the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty, or to any similar agreement on the arms trade.

S. RES. 348

At the request of Mr. BURR, the names of the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 348, a resolution expressing support for the internal rebuilding, resettlement, and reconciliation within Sri Lanka that are necessary to ensure a lasting peace.

S. RES. 355

At the request of Mr. GRAHAM, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) and the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 355, a resolution calling on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to cease the extra-judicial release of Afghan detainees, carry out its commitments pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding governing the transfer of Afghan detainees from the United States custody to Afghan control and to uphold the Afghan Rule of Law with respect to the referral and disposition of detainees.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. CORNYN:

S. 2039. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require that ITIN applicants submit their application in person at taxpayer assistance centers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 2039

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 ''ITIN Reform Act of 2014''.

SEC. 2. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ISSUANCE OF ITINS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 6109 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(i) SPECIAL RULES RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE OF ITINS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may issue an individual taxpayer identification number to an individual only if the requirements of paragraphs (2) and (3) are met.

''(2) IN-PERSON APPLICATION.—The requirements of this paragraph are met if, with respect to an application for an individual taxpayer identification number—

''(A) the applicant submits an application in person, using Form W–7 (or any successor thereof) and including the required documentation, at a taxpayer assistance center of the Internal Revenue Service, or

''(B) in the case of an applicant who resides outside of the United States, the applicant submits the application in person to an employee of the Internal Revenue Service or a designee of the Secretary at a United States diplomatic mission or consular post, together with the required documentation.

''(3) INITIAL ON-SITE VERIFICATION OF DOCUMENTATION.—The requirements of this paragraph are met if, with respect to each application, an employee of the Internal Revenue Service at the taxpayer assistance center, or the employee or designee described in paragraph (2)(B), as the case may be, conducts an initial verification of the documentation supporting the application submitted under paragraph (2).

''(4) REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION.—For purposes of this subsection—

''(A) required documentation includes such documentation as the Secretary may require that proves the individual's identity and foreign status, and

''(B) the Secretary may only accept original documents.

''(5) EXCEPTIONS.—

''(A) MILITARY SPOUSES.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply to the spouse, or the dependents, without a social security number of a taxpayer who is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States.

''(B) TREATY BENEFITS.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply to a nonresident alien applying for an individual taxpayer identification number for the purpose of claiming tax treaty benefits.

''(6) TERM.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—An individual taxpayer identification number issued after the date of the enactment of this subsection shall be valid only for the 5-year period which includes the taxable year of the individual for which such number is issued and the 4 succeeding taxable years.

''(B) RENEWAL OF ITIN.—Such number shall be valid for an additional 5-year period only

if it is renewed through an application which satisfies the requirements under paragraphs (2) and (3).

''(C) SPECIAL RULE FOR EXISTING ITINS.—In the case of an individual with an individual taxpayer identification number issued on or before the date of the enactment of this subsection, such number shall not be valid after the earlier of—

''(i) the end of the 3-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this subsection, or

''(ii) the first taxable year beginning after—

''(I) the date of the enactment of this subsection, and

''(II) any taxable year for which the individual (or, if a dependent, on which the individual is included) did not make a return.''.

(b) INTEREST.—Section 6611 of such Code is amended by redesignating subsection (h) as subsection (i) and by inserting after subsection (g) the following new subsection:

''(h) SPECIAL RULE RELATING TO ITINS.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, no interest shall be allowed or paid to or on behalf of a individual with respect to any overpayment until 45 days after an individual taxpayer identification number is issued to the individual.''.

(c) AUDIT BY TIGTA.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every two years thereafter, the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration shall conduct an audit of the program of the Internal Revenue Service for the issuance of individual taxpayer identification numbers pursuant to section 6109(i) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986. The report required by this subsection shall be submitted to the Congress.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) SUBSECTION (a).—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply to requests for individual taxpayer identification numbers made after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(2) SUBSECTION (b).—The amendment made by subsection (b) shall apply to returns due, claims filed, and refunds paid after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 32—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING THE NEED FOR INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF WAR CRIMES, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY, AND GENOCIDE, WHETHER COMMITTED BY OFFICIALS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA, OR MEMBERS OF OTHER GROUPS INVOLVED IN CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA, AND CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT TO DIRECT THE UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS TO USE THE VOICE AND VOTE OF THE UNITED STATES TO IMMEDIATELY PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SYRIAN WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. RUBIO) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations:

S. CON. RES. 32

Whereas the Government of Syria is reported to have engaged in widespread torture, rape, and massacre of civilians, including by means of chemical weapons, most recently on or about August 21, 2013;

Whereas other groups involved in civil war in Syria, including the al-Nusra Front, are reported to have engaged in torture, rape, summary execution of government soldiers, kidnapping for ransom, and violence against civilians, including Christians and others who are not Sunni Muslims;

Whereas these and other actions perpetrated by the Government of Syria and other groups involved in civil war in Syria may constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide;

Whereas Syria is not a state-party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, done at Rome July 17, 1998, and is not a member of the International Criminal Court;

Whereas the international community has previously established ad hoc tribunals through the United Nations to bring justice in specific countries where there have been war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide;

Whereas ad hoc tribunals, including the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone, have successfully investigated and prosecuted war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, and there are many positive lessons to be learned from these three ad hoc tribunals; and

Whereas any lasting, peaceful solution to civil war in Syria must be based upon justice for all, including members of all factions, political parties, ethnicities, and religions: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This concurrent resolution may be cited as the ''Immediate Establishment of Syrian War Crimes Tribunal Resolution''.

SEC. 2. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the United States Government should urge the Government of Syria and other groups involved in civil war in Syria to implement an immediate cease fire and engage in negotiations to end the bloodshed;

(2) the United States Government should publicly declare that it is a requirement of basic justice that war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, whether committed by officials of the Government of Syria, or members of other groups involved in civil war in Syria, should be investigated and prosecuted;

(3) the President should direct the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations to use the voice and vote of the United States to immediately promote the establishment of a Syrian war crimes tribunal, an ad hoc court to prosecute the perpetrators of such serious crimes committed during the civil war in Syria;

(4) in working with other countries to establish a Syrian war crimes tribunal, the United States Government should promote judicial procedures that enable the prosecution of the most culpable persons guilty of directing such serious crimes;

(5) the United States Government should make an immediate priority the collection of information that can be supplied to a Syrian war crimes tribunal for use as evidence to support the indictment and trial of any person involved in civil war in Syria and responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide in Syria; and

(6) the United States Government should urge other interested states to apprehend and deliver into the custody of a Syrian war crimes tribunal persons indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide in Syria and urge such states to provide information pertaining to such crimes to the tribunal.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 2744. Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2745. Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2746. Mrs. HAGAN (for herself and Mrs. GILLIBRAND) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2747. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2748. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2749. Mrs. GILLIBRAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2750. Mrs. GILLIBRAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2751. Mrs. GILLIBRAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2752. Mr. BURR (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, and Mr. INHOFE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 2753. Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. RUBIO) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 2744. Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 76, between lines 8 and 9, insert the following:

SEC. 330. CANADIAN FORCES BASE GAGETOWN REGISTRY.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish and maintain a registry to be known as the ''Canadian Forces Base Gagetown Health Registry'' (in this section referred to as the ''Registry'').

(b) CONTENTS.—Except as provided in subsection (c), the Registry shall include the following information:

(1) A list containing the name of each individual who—

(A) while serving as a member of the Armed Forces, was stationed at or underwent training at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, at any time during the period beginning on January 1, 1956, and ending on December 31, 2006; and

(B)(i) applies for care or services from the Department of Veterans Affairs under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code;

(ii) files a claim for compensation under chapter 11 of such title on the basis of any disability that may be associated with such service;

(iii) dies and is survived by a spouse, child, or parent who files a claim for dependency and indemnity compensation under chapter 13 of such title on the basis of such service;

(iv) requests from the Secretary a health examination under subsection (d)(1); or

(v)(I) receives from the Secretary a health examination similar to the health examination under subsection (d)(1); and

(II) submits to the Secretary a request to be included in the Registry.

(2) Relevant medical data relating to the health status of, and other information that the Secretary considers relevant and appropriate with respect to, each individual described in paragraph (1) who—

(A) grants to the Secretary permission to include such information in the Registry; or

(B) at the time the name of the individual is added to the Registry, is deceased.

(c) INDIVIDUALS SUBMITTING CLAIMS OR MAKING REQUESTS BEFORE DATE OF ENACTMENT.—If an application, claim, or request referred to in paragraph (1) of subsection (b) was submitted, filed, or made with respect to an individual described in that paragraph before the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall, to the extent feasible, include in the Registry the information described in that subsection relating to that individual.

(d) EXAMINATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Upon the request of an individual described in subsection (b)(1)(A), the Secretary shall provide the individual with—

(A) a health examination (including any appropriate diagnostic tests); and

(B) consultation and counseling with respect to the results of the examination and tests.

(2) CONSULTATION AND COUNSELING TO FAMILY MEMBERS.—In the case of an individual described in subsection (b)(1)(A) who is deceased, upon the request of a spouse, child, or parent of that individual, the Secretary shall provide that spouse, child, or parent with consultation and counseling with respect to the results of the examination and tests under paragraph (1)(A) or the results of an examination similar to that examination with respect to that individual.

(e) OUTREACH.—

(1) ONGOING OUTREACH TO INDIVIDUALS LISTED IN THE REGISTRY.—The Secretary shall, from time to time, notify individuals listed in the Registry of significant developments in research on the health consequences of potential exposure to a toxic substance or environmental hazard related to service at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown.

(2) EXAMINATION OUTREACH.—The Secretary shall carry out appropriate outreach activities with respect to the provision of any health examinations (including any diagnostic tests) and consultation and counseling services under subsection (d).

(f) DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INFORMATION.—The Secretary of Defense shall furnish to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs such information maintained by the Secretary of Defense as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs considers necessary to establish and maintain the Registry.

(g) INDEPENDENT STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall provide for a study on the potential exposure of individuals to toxic substances or environmental hazards related to service at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown at any time during the period beginning on January 1, 1956, and ending on December 31, 2006.

(2) INDEPENDENT ENTITY.—The study required by paragraph (1) shall be carried out by an entity that—

(A) has experience conducting studies with respect to the exposure of individuals to toxic substances or environmental hazards; and

(B) is not affiliated with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(3) DEADLINE FOR COMPLETION.—The study required by paragraph (1) shall be completed not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(h) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, and each year thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the Registry.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The number of veterans included in the Registry.

(B) Any trend in claims for compensation under chapter 11 or 13 of title 38, United States Code, with respect to veterans included in the Registry.

(C) A description of the outreach efforts made by the Secretary under subsection (e) during the one-year period ending on the date of such report.

(D) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

SA 2745. Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Mr. KING) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 61, between lines 5 and 6, insert the following:

SEC. 314. PROGRAM OF ENHANCED CONTRACT CARE AUTHORITY FOR HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 17 is amended by inserting after section 1703 the following new section:

"§ 1703A. Program of enhanced contract care authority for health care needs of veterans

''(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—(1) The Secretary shall conduct a program under which the Secretary provides covered health services to covered veterans through qualifying non-Department health care providers.

''(2) The Secretary shall commence the conduct of the program on October 1, 2014.

''(b) COVERED VETERANS.—For purposes of the program under this section, a covered veteran is any veteran who—

''(1) is—

''(A) enrolled in the system of patient enrollment established and operated under section 1705(a) of this title as of the date of the commencement of the program under subsection (a)(2); or

''(B) eligible for health care under section 1710(e)(3) of such title; and

''(2) resides in a location that is—

''(A) more than 60 minutes driving distance from the nearest Department health care facility providing primary care services, if the veteran is seeking such services;

''(B) more than 120 minutes driving distance from the nearest Department health care facility providing acute hospital care, if the veteran is seeking such care; or

''(C) more than 240 minutes driving distance from the nearest Department health care facility providing tertiary care, if the veteran is seeking such care.

''(c) COVERED HEALTH SERVICES.—For purposes of the program under this section, a covered health service with respect to a covered veteran is any hospital care, medical service, rehabilitative service, or preventative health service that is authorized to be provided by the Secretary to the veteran under this chapter or any other provision of law.

''(d) QUALIFYING NON-DEPARTMENT HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS.—For purposes of the program under this section, an entity or individual is a qualifying non-Department health care provider of a covered health service if the Secretary determines that the entity or individual is qualified to furnish such service to a covered veteran under the program.

''(e) LOCATIONS.—The program shall be carried out within—

''(1) of the areas at which the Secretary was carrying out the pilot program established under section 403 of the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–387; 38 U.S.C. 1703 note) on the day before the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, those areas at which the Secretary has determined that such pilot program was carried out successfully; and

''(2) any additional area that the Secretary may select for purposes of the program.

''(f) ELECTION.—A covered veteran seeking a covered health service from a qualifying non-Department health care provider under the program under this section shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor in such form, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary shall specify for purposes of the program.

''(g) PROVISION OF SERVICES THROUGH CONTRACT.—The Secretary shall provide covered health services to veterans under the program under this section through contracts with qualifying non-Department health care providers for the provision of such services.

''(h) EXCHANGE OF MEDICAL INFORMATION.—In conducting the program under this section, the Secretary shall develop and utilize a functional capability to provide for the exchange of appropriate medical information between the Department and qualifying non-Department health care providers providing health services under the program.

''(i) REPORTS.—Not later than the 30 days after the end of each year in which the program under this section is conducted, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee of Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that includes—

''(1) the assessment of the Secretary of the program during the preceding year, including its cost, volume, quality, patient satisfaction, benefit to veterans, and such other findings and conclusions with respect to the program as the Secretary considers appropriate; and

''(2) such recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate regarding—

''(A) the continuation of the program; and

''(B) extension of the program to other or all Veterans Integrated Service Networks of the Department.

''(j) SOURCE OF FUNDS.—In carrying out the program under this section, such sums as may be necessary to carry out the program shall be derived from amounts appropriated or otherwise made available to the Office of Rural Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs after the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1703 the following new item:

''1703A. Program of enhanced contract care authority for health care needs of veterans.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 403 of the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–387; 38 U.S.C. 1703 note) is repealed.

SA 2746. Mrs. HAGAN (for herself and Mrs. GILLIBRAND) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 207, between lines 8 and 9, insert the following:

Subtitle F—Work Opportunity Tax Credit

SEC. 451. WORK OPPORTUNITY CREDIT TO SMALL BUSINESSES FOR HIRING MEMBERS OF READY RESERVE OR NATIONAL GUARD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 51 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3) of subsection (b), by inserting ''or any individual described in subparagraph (J) of subsection (d)(1) who has been certified as having aggregate periods of unemployment described in clause (ii)(III) of such subparagraph'' after ''subsection (d)(3)(A)(iv)'', and

(2) in paragraph (1) of subsection (d), by striking ''or'' at the end of subparagraph (H), by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (I) and inserting '', or'', and by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(J) in the case of an eligible employer (as defined in section 408(p)(2)(C)(i)), an individual who—

''(i) is a member of—

''(I) the Ready Reserve (as described in section 10142 of title 10, United States Code), or

''(II) the National Guard (as defined in section 101(c)(1) of such title 10), and

''(ii) is certified by the designated local agency as—

''(I) being a member of a family described in clause (i) of paragraph (3)(A),

''(II) having aggregate periods of unemployment during the 1-year period ending on the hiring date which equal or exceed 4 weeks (but less than 6 months), or

''(III) having aggregate periods of unemployment during the 1-year period ending on the hiring date which equal or exceed 6 months.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to wages paid or incurred by the employer during the taxable year to individuals who begin work for the employer after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 452. PERMANENT EXTENSION OF WORK OPPORTUNITY CREDIT FOR EMPLOYERS HIRING QUALIFIED VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF READY RESERVE AND NATIONAL GUARD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 51(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by inserting ''(other than any individual described in subparagraph (B) or (J) of subsection (d)(1))'' after ''individual''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by this section shall apply to individuals who begin work for the employer after December 31, 2013.

SA 2747. Mr. SANDERS submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike all after the first word and insert the following:

1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.

Sec. 3. Budgetary effects.

TITLE I—SURVIVOR AND DEPENDENT MATTERS

Sec. 101. Extension of initial period for increased dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses with children.

Sec. 102. Eligibility for dependency and indemnity compensation, educational assistance, and housing loans for surviving spouses who remarry after age 55.

Sec. 103. Extension of marriage delimiting date for surviving spouses of Persian Gulf War veterans to qualify for death pension.

Sec. 104. Making effective date provision consistent with provision for benefits eligibility of a veteran's child based upon termination of remarriage by annulment.

Sec. 105. Expansion of Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship.

Sec. 106. Expansion of Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program.

Sec. 107. Benefits for children of certain Thailand service veterans born with spina bifida.

Sec. 108. Program on assisted living for children of Vietnam veterans and certain Korea service veterans born with spina bifida.

Sec. 109. Program on grief counseling in retreat settings for surviving spouses of members of the Armed Forces who die while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces.

Sec. 110. Program evaluation on survivors' and dependents' educational assistance authorities.

TITLE II—EDUCATION MATTERS

Sec. 201. Approval of courses of education provided by public institutions of higher learning for purposes of All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program and Post-9/11 Educational Assistance conditional on in-State tuition rate for veterans.

Sec. 202. Extension and expansion of authority for certain qualifying work-study activities for purposes of the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 203. Prohibitions relating to references to GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Sec. 204. Review of utilization of educational assistance to pursue programs of training on the job and participating employers.

Sec. 205. Report on debt management and collection.

Sec. 206. Restoration of prior reporting fee multipliers.

TITLE III—HEALTH CARE MATTERS

Subtitle A—Expansion and Improvements of Benefits Generally

Sec. 301. Requirement for enrollment in patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs of certain veterans eligible for enrollment by law but not currently permitted to enroll.

Sec. 302. Further extension of period of eligibility for health care for veterans of combat service during certain periods of hostilities and war.

Sec. 303. Extension to all veterans with a serious service-connected disability of eligibility for participation in family caregiver program.

Sec. 304. Improved access to appropriate immunizations for veterans.

Sec. 305. Expansion of provision of chiropractic care and services to veterans.

Sec. 306. Modification of commencement date of period of service at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for eligibility for hospital care and medical services in connection with exposure to contaminated water.

Sec. 307. Expansion of emergency treatment reimbursement for certain veterans.

Sec. 308. Modification of determination of eligibility of veterans for treatment as a low-income family for purposes of enrollment in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 309. Extension of sunset date regarding transportation of individuals to and from facilities of Department of Veterans Affairs and requirement of report.

Sec. 310. Coverage of costs of care for veterans at medical foster homes.

Sec. 311. Extension and modification of pilot program on assisted living services for veterans with traumatic brain injury.

Sec. 312. Program on health promotion for overweight and obese veterans through support of fitness center memberships.

Sec. 313. Program on health promotion for veterans through establishment of Department of Veterans Affairs fitness facilities.

Subtitle B—Health Care Administration

Sec. 321. Extension of Department of Veterans Affairs Health Professional Scholarship Program.

Sec. 322. Expansion of availability of prosthetic and orthotic care for veterans.

Sec. 323. Contracting for health care.

Sec. 324. Limitation on expansion of dialysis pilot program.

Sec. 325. Requirement for Department of Veterans Affairs policy on reporting cases of infectious diseases at facilities of the Department.

Sec. 326. Independent assessment of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks and medical centers of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 327. Requirements in connection with next update of current strategic plan for Office of Rural Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 328. Report on provision of telemedicine services.

Sec. 329. Designation of Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Subtitle C—Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Sec. 331. Expansion of research and education on and delivery of complementary and alternative medicine to veterans.
Sec. 332. Program on integration of complementary and alternative medicine within Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers.
Sec. 333. Studies of barriers encountered by veterans in receiving, and administrators and clinicians in providing, complementary and alternative medicine services furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 334. Program on use of wellness programs as complementary approach to mental health care for veterans and family members of veterans.

Subtitle D—Mental Health Care

Sec. 341. Inclusion of mental health professionals in the education and training program for health personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 342. Education program and peer support program for family members and caregivers of veterans with mental health disorders.
Sec. 343. Report on provision of mental health services for families of certain veterans at facilities of the Department.
Sec. 344. Annual report on community mental health partnership pilot program.

Subtitle E—Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement

Sec. 351. Restorative dental services for veterans.
Sec. 352. Pilot program on expansion of furnishing of dental care to all enrolled veterans.
Sec. 353. Program on education to promote dental health in veterans.
Sec. 354. Information on dental services for inclusion in electronic medical records under dental insurance pilot program.
Sec. 355. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle F—Health Care Related to Sexual Trauma

Sec. 361. Expansion of eligibility for sexual trauma counseling and treatment to veterans on inactive duty training.
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Sec. 371. Clarification that fertility counseling and treatment are medical services which the Secretary may furnish to veterans like other medical services.
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TITLE IV—EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED MATTERS

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Sec. 401. Reauthorization of veterans retraining assistance program.
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Sec. 611. Program on treatment of certain applications for dependency and indemnity compensation as fully developed claims.

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Subtitle D—Board of Veterans' Appeals and Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

Sec. 631. Treatment of certain misfiled documents as a notice of appeal to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

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TITLE VII—OUTREACH MATTERS

Sec. 701. Program to increase coordination of outreach efforts between the Department of Veterans Affairs and Federal, State, and local agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Sec. 702. Cooperative agreements between Secretary of Veterans Affairs and States on outreach activities.

Sec. 703. Advisory committee on outreach activities of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 704. Advisory boards on outreach activities of Department of Veterans Affairs relating to health care.

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TITLE VIII—ENHANCEMENT OF RIGHTS UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT

Sec. 801. Modification of period determining which actions are covered under stay of proceedings and adjustment of obligation protections concerning mortgages and trust deeds of members of uniformed services.

Sec. 802. Protections for members of uniformed services regarding professional licenses.

Sec. 803. Prohibition on denial of credit because of eligibility for protection.

Sec. 804. Interest rate limitation on debt entered into during military service to consolidate or refinance student loans incurred before military service.

Sec. 805. Termination of residential leases after assignment or relocation to quarters of United States or housing facility under jurisdiction of uniformed service.

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Sec. 809. Clerical amendments.

TITLE IX—OTHER MATTERS

Sec. 901. Repeal of certain reductions made by Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013.

Sec. 902. Consideration by Secretary of Veterans Affairs of resources disposed of for less than fair market value by individuals applying for pension.

Sec. 903. Extension of reduced pension for certain veterans covered by medicaid plans for services furnished by nursing facilities.

Sec. 904. Conditions on award of per diem payments by Secretary of Veterans Affairs for provision of housing or services to homeless veterans.

Sec. 905. Exception to certain recapture requirements and treatment of contracts and grants with State homes with respect to care for homeless veterans.

Sec. 906. Extended period for scheduling of medical exams for veterans receiving temporary disability ratings for severe mental disorders.

Sec. 907. Authority to issue Veterans ID Cards.

Sec. 908. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

Sec. 909. Extension of authority for Secretary of Veterans Affairs to obtain information from Secretary of Treasury and Commissioner of Social Security for income verification purposes.

Sec. 910. Extension of authority for Secretary of Veterans Affairs to issue and guarantee certain loans.

Sec. 911. Review of determination of certain service in Philippines during World War II.

Sec. 912. Review of determination of certain service of merchant mariners during World War II.

Sec. 913. Report on Laotian military support of Armed Forces of the United States during Vietnam War.

Sec. 914. Report on practices of the Department of Veterans Affairs to adequately provide services to veterans with hearing loss.

Sec. 915. Report on joint programs of Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense with respect to hearing loss of members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

Sec. 916. Limitation on aggregate amount of bonuses payable to personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs during fiscal year 2014.

Sec. 917. Amendment to OCO adjustments.

SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.

Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 3. BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

(a) PAYGO SCORECARD.—The budgetary effects of this Act shall not be entered on either PAYGO scorecard maintained pursuant to section 4(d) of the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (2 U.S.C. 933(d)).

(b) SENATE PAYGO SCORECARD.—The budgetary effects of this Act shall not be entered on any PAYGO scorecard maintained for purposes of section 201 of S. Con. Res. 21 (110th Congress).

TITLE I—SURVIVOR AND DEPENDENT MATTERS

SEC. 101. EXTENSION OF INITIAL PERIOD FOR INCREASED DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WITH CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1311(f)(2) is amended by striking ''two-year'' and inserting ''three-year''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect as of September 30, 2014, and shall apply to any surviving spouse who was eligible for or in receipt of benefits under section 1311(f) of title 38, United States Code, on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 102. ELIGIBILITY FOR DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION, EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, AND HOUSING LOANS FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WHO REMARRY AFTER AGE 55.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2)(B) of section 103(d) is amended to read as follows:

''(B) The remarriage after age 55 of the surviving spouse of a veteran shall not bar the furnishing of benefits specified in paragraph (5) to such person as the surviving spouse of the veteran.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (5) of such section is amended by striking ''Paragraphs (2)(A)'' and inserting ''Paragraphs (2)''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 103. EXTENSION OF MARRIAGE DELIMITING DATE FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS TO QUALIFY FOR DEATH PENSION.

Section 1541(f)(1)(E) is amended by striking ''January 1, 2001'' and inserting ''the date that is 10 years and one day after the date on which the Persian Gulf War was terminated, as prescribed by Presidential proclamation or by law''.

SEC. 104. MAKING EFFECTIVE DATE PROVISION CONSISTENT WITH PROVISION FOR BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY OF A VETERAN'S CHILD BASED UPON TERMINATION OF REMARRIAGE BY ANNULMENT.

Section 5110(l) is amended by striking '', or of an award or increase of benefits based on recognition of a child upon termination of the child's marriage by death or divorce,''.

SEC. 105. EXPANSION OF MARINE GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN DAVID FRY SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) EXPANSION OF ENTITLEMENT.—Subsection (b)(9) of section 3311 is amended by inserting ''or spouse'' after ''child''.

(b) LIMITATION AND ELECTION ON CERTAIN BENEFITS.—Subsection (f) of such section is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (4); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraphs:

''(2) LIMITATION.—The entitlement of an individual to assistance under subsection (a) pursuant to paragraph (9) of subsection (b) because the individual was a spouse of a person described in such paragraph shall expire on the earlier of—

''(A) the date that is 15 years after the date on which the person died; and

''(B) the date on which the individual remarries.

''(3) ELECTION ON RECEIPT OF CERTAIN BENEFITS.—A surviving spouse entitled to assistance under subsection (a) pursuant to paragraph (9) of subsection (b) who is also entitled to educational assistance under chapter 35 of this title may not receive assistance under both this section and such chapter, but shall make an irrevocable election (in such form and manner as the Secretary may prescribe) under which section or chapter to receive educational assistance.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 3321(b)(4) is amended—

(1) by striking ''an individual'' and inserting ''a child''; and

(2) by striking ''such individual's'' each time it appears and inserting ''such child's''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 106. EXPANSION OF YELLOW RIBBON G.I. EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3317(a) is amended by striking ''in paragraphs (1) and (2)'' and inserting ''in paragraphs (1), (2), and (9)''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to academic terms beginning after July 1, 2015.

SEC. 107. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN OF CERTAIN THAILAND SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 18 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1822. Benefits for children of certain Thailand service veterans born with spina bifida

''(a) BENEFITS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary may provide to any child of a veteran of covered service in Thailand who is suffering from spina bifida the health care, vocational training and rehabilitation, and monetary allowance required to be paid to a child of a Vietnam veteran who is suffering from spina bifida under subchapter I of this chapter as if such child of a veteran of covered service in Thailand were a child of a Vietnam veteran who is suffering from spina bifida under such subchapter.

''(b) SPINA BIFIDA CONDITIONS COVERED.—This section applies with respect to all forms and manifestations of spina bifida, except spina bifida occulta.

''(c) VETERAN OF COVERED SERVICE IN THAILAND.—For purposes of this section, a veteran of covered service in Thailand is any individual, without regard to the characterization of that individual's service, who—

''(1) served in the active military, naval, or air service in Thailand, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975; and

''(2) is determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to have been exposed to a herbicide agent during such service in Thailand.

''(d) HERBICIDE AGENT.—For purposes of this section, the term 'herbicide agent' means a chemical in a herbicide used in support of United States and allied military operations in Thailand, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT TO DEFINITION OF ''CHILD''.—Section 1831(1) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) by striking ''subchapter III of this chapter'' and inserting ''section 1821 of this title''; and

(B) in clause (i), by striking ''section 1821 of this title'' and inserting ''that section''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) For purposes of section 1822 of this title, an individual, regardless of age or marital status, who—

''(i) is the natural child of a veteran of covered service in Thailand (as determined for purposes of that section); and

''(ii) was conceived after the date on which that veteran first entered service described in subsection (c) of that section.''.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SUBCHAPTER HEADING.—The heading for subchapter III of chapter 18 is amended by inserting ''AND THAILAND'' after ''KOREA''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 18 is amended—

(A) by striking the item relating to subchapter III and inserting the following new item:

''SUBCHAPTER III—CHILDREN OF CERTAIN KOREA AND THAILAND SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA'';

and

(B) by inserting after the item relating to section 1821 the following new item:

''1822. Benefits for children of certain Thailand service veterans born with spina bifida.''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 108. PROGRAM ON ASSISTED LIVING FOR CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS AND CERTAIN KOREA SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA.

(a) PROGRAM.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing assisted living, group home care, or similar services in lieu of nursing home care to covered individuals.

(b) COVERED INDIVIDUALS.—For purposes of this section, a covered individual is any individual who is entitled to health care under subchapter I or III of chapter 18 of title 38, United States Code.

(c) DURATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(2) CONTINUATION.—Subject to paragraph (3), the Secretary may continue the program for an additional two-year period as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(3) TERMINATION.—The program may not operate after the date that is five years after the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) SCOPE OF SERVICES AND PROGRAM.—Under the program, the Secretary shall provide covered individuals with integrated, comprehensive services, including the following:

(1) Assisted living, group home care, or such other similar services as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) Transportation services.

(3) Such other services as the Secretary considers appropriate for the care of covered individuals under the program.

(e) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out the program, the Secretary shall—

(1) inform all covered individuals of the services available under the program;

(2) enter into agreements with appropriate providers of assisted living, group home care, or other similar services for provision of services under the program; and

(3) determine the appropriate number of covered individuals to be enrolled in the program and criteria for such enrollment.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) PRELIMINARY REPORTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of the program and, if the program is continued under subsection (c)(2), not later than three years after the date of the commencement of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) A description of the implementation and operation of the program.

(ii) The number of covered individuals receiving benefits under the program.

(iii) An analysis that compares the costs of furnishing assisted living, group home care, or similar services with the costs of furnishing nursing home care.

(iv) An analysis of the costs and benefits under the program.

(v) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(vi) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary may have.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(ii) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary may have.

(g) FUNDING.—Amounts to carry out the program shall be derived from amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for the furnishing of nursing home care under chapter 18 of title 38, United States Code.

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 109. PROGRAM ON GRIEF COUNSELING IN RETREAT SETTINGS FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO DIE WHILE SERVING ON ACTIVE DUTY IN THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out, through the Readjustment Counseling Service of the Veterans Health Administration, a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing grief counseling services described in subsection (b) in group retreat settings to surviving spouses of members of the Armed Forces who die while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces who would, as determined by the Readjustment Counseling Service, benefit from the services provided under the program.

(2) PARTICIPATION AT ELECTION OF SURVIVING SPOUSE.—The participation of a surviving spouse in the program under this section shall be at the election of the surviving spouse.

(b) COVERED SERVICES.—The services provided to a surviving spouse under the program shall include the following:

(1) Information and counseling on coping with grief.

(2) Information about benefits and services available to surviving spouses under laws administered by the Secretary.

(3) Such other information and counseling as the Secretary considers appropriate to assist a surviving spouse under the program with adjusting to the death of a spouse.

(c) EVENTS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program at not fewer than six events as follows:

(1) Three events at which surviving spouses with dependent children are encouraged to bring their children.

(2) Three events at which surviving spouses with dependent children are not encouraged to bring their children.

(d) DURATION.—The program shall be carried out during the two-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the first year of the program and not later than 180 days after the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the program.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall contain the findings and conclusions of the Secretary as a result of the program, and shall include such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the terms ''active duty'', ''Armed Forces'', and ''surviving spouse'' have the meanings given such terms in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(g) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 110. PROGRAM EVALUATION ON SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE AUTHORITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into a contract with an appropriate private sector entity to conduct a program evaluation of the authorities for survivors' and dependents' educational assistance under chapter 35 of title 38, United States Code.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than six months after the entry into the contract required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the results of the program evaluation conducted pursuant to the contract, together with such comments on the results of the program evaluation as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE II—EDUCATION MATTERS

SEC. 201. APPROVAL OF COURSES OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING FOR PURPOSES OF ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE CONDITIONAL ON IN-STATE TUITION RATE FOR VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3679 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter and subject to paragraphs (3) through (6), the Secretary shall disapprove a course of education provided by a public institution of higher learning to a covered individual pursuing a course of education with educational assistance under chapter 30 or 33 of this title while living in the State in which the public institution of higher learning is located if the institution charges tuition and fees for that course for the covered individual at a rate that is higher than the rate the institution charges for tuition and fees for that course for residents of the State in which the institution is located, regardless of the covered individual's State of residence.

''(2) For purposes of this subsection, a covered individual is any individual as follows:

''(A) A veteran who was discharged or released from a period of not fewer than 90 days of service in the active military, naval, or air service less than three years before the date of enrollment in the course concerned.

''(B) An individual who is entitled to assistance under section 3311(b)(9) or 3319 of this title by virtue of such individual's relationship to a veteran described in subparagraph (A).

''(3) If after enrollment in a course of education that is subject to disapproval under paragraph (1) by reason of paragraph (2)(A) or (2)(B) a covered individual pursues one or more courses of education at the same public institution of higher learning while remaining continuously enrolled (other than during regularly scheduled breaks between courses, semesters or terms) at that institution of higher learning, any course so pursued by the covered individual at that institution of higher learning while so continuously enrolled shall also be subject to disapproval under paragraph (1).

''(4) It shall not be grounds to disapprove a course of education under paragraph (1) if a public institution of higher learning requires a covered individual pursuing a course of education at the institution to demonstrate an intent, by means other than satisfying a physical presence requirement, to establish residency in the State in which the institution is located, or to satisfy other requirements not relating to the establishment of residency, in order to be charged tuition and fees for that course at a rate that is equal to or less than the rate the institution charges for tuition and fees for that course for residents of the State.

''(5) The Secretary may waive such requirements of paragraph (1) as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(6) Disapproval under paragraph (1) shall apply only with respect to educational assistance under chapters 30 and 33 of this title.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (c) of section 3679 of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a) of this section), shall apply with respect to educational assistance provided for pursuit of programs of education during academic terms that begin after July 1, 2015, through courses of education that commence on or after that date.

SEC. 202. EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF AUTHORITY FOR CERTAIN QUALIFYING WORK-STUDY ACTIVITIES FOR PURPOSES OF THE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) EXTENSION OF EXPIRING CURRENT AUTHORITY.—Section 3485(a)(4) is amended by striking ''June 30, 2013'' each place it appears and inserting ''June 30, 2015''.

(b) EXPANSION TO OUTREACH SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(K) During the period beginning on June 30, 2013, and ending on June 30, 2015, the following activities carried out at the offices of Members of Congress for such Members:

''(i) The distribution of information to members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their dependents about the benefits and services under laws administered by the Secretary and other appropriate governmental and nongovernmental programs.

''(ii) The preparation and processing of papers and other documents, including documents to assist in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.''.

(c) ANNUAL REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than June 30 of 2014 and 2015, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the work-study allowances paid under paragraph (1) of section 3485(a) of title 38, United States Code, during the most recent one-year period for qualifying work-study activities described in paragraph (4) of such section, as amended by subsections (a) and (b) of this section.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include, for the year covered by such report, the following:

(A) A description of the recipients of such work-study allowances.

(B) A list of the locations where qualifying work-study activities were carried out.

(C) A description of the outreach conducted by the Secretary to increase awareness of the eligibility of such work-study activities for such work-study allowances.

SEC. 203. PROHIBITIONS RELATING TO REFERENCES TO GI BILL AND POST-9/11 GI BILL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 36 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3697B. Prohibition relating to references to GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill

''(a) PROHIBITION.—(1) No person may, except with the written permission of the Secretary, use the words and phrases covered by this subsection in connection with any promotion, goods, services, or commercial activity in a manner that reasonably and falsely suggests that such use is approved, endorsed, or authorized by the Department or any component thereof.

''(2) For purposes of this subsection, the words and phrases covered by this subsection are as follows:

''(A) 'GI Bill'.

''(B) 'Post-9/11 GI Bill'.

''(3) A determination that a use of one or more words and phrases covered by this subsection in connection with a promotion, goods, services, or commercial activity is not a violation of this subsection may not be

made solely on the ground that such promotion, goods, services, or commercial activity includes a disclaimer of affiliation with the Department or any component thereof.

''(b) ENFORCEMENT BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—(1) When any person is engaged or is about to engage in an act or practice which constitutes or will constitute conduct prohibited by subsection (a), the Attorney General may initiate a civil proceeding in a district court of the United States to enjoin such act or practice.

''(2) Such court may, at any time before final determination, enter such restraining orders or prohibitions, or take such other action as is warranted, to prevent injury to the United States or to any person or class of persons for whose protection the action is brought.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 36 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3697A the following new item:

''3697B. Prohibition relating to references to GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill.''.

SEC. 204. REVIEW OF UTILIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO PURSUE PROGRAMS OF TRAINING ON THE JOB AND PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall commence a review of—

(1) the utilization of educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pursue programs of training on the job (other than programs of apprenticeship); and

(2) the availability of such programs to individuals seeking to pursue such programs with such educational assistance.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date on which the Secretary commences the review required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on such review.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The extent of utilization as described in paragraph (1) of subsection (a).

(B) An assessment of the availability of programs as described in paragraph (2) of such subsection.

(C) A description of any barriers the Secretary has identified to greater utilization of educational assistance for pursuit of a program of training on the job or availability of such programs.

(D) Such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary may have to increase or decrease such utilization or availability.

(E) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

SEC. 205. REPORT ON DEBT MANAGEMENT AND COLLECTION.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on processes used by the Department of Veterans Affairs to identify and resolve cases of incorrect payments associated with educational assistance under chapters 30 and 33 of title 38, United States Code.

(b) ISSUES ADDRESSED.—The report required by subsection (a) shall, to the extent possible, address the following:

(1) The effectiveness of the processes referred to in subsection (a) in identifying and resolving incorrect payments associated with educational assistance under chapters 30 and 33 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The accuracy of overpayment information provided to veterans by the Education Service and Debt Management Center of the Department.

(3) How well the Debt Management Center of the Department communicates and works with veterans to resolve disputed debt amounts.

(4) How the payment and debt collection processes of the Department compare to comparable programs in other Federal agencies.

(5) Any recommendations to improve the payment and debt collection processes of the Department that the Comptroller General considers appropriate.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 206. RESTORATION OF PRIOR REPORTING FEE MULTIPLIERS.

Section 3684(c) is amended—

(1) by striking ''$12'' and inserting ''$7''; and

(2) by striking ''$15'' and inserting ''$11''.

TITLE III—HEALTH CARE MATTERS

SUBTITLE A—EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENTS OF BENEFITS GENERALLY

SEC. 301. REQUIREMENT FOR ENROLLMENT IN PATIENT ENROLLMENT SYSTEM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF CERTAIN VETERANS ELIGIBLE FOR ENROLLMENT BY LAW BUT NOT CURRENTLY PERMITTED TO ENROLL.

(a) REQUIREMENT FOR ENROLLMENT.—Section 1705 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(d)(1) The Secretary shall provide for the enrollment in the patient enrollment system of veterans specified in paragraph (2) by not later than December 31, 2014.

''(2) Veterans specified in this paragraph are as follows:

''(A) Veterans with noncompensable service-connected disabilities rated as zero percent disabling who—

''(i) are not otherwise permitted to enroll in the system as of the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014; and

''(ii) as of the date of enrollment under this section, do not have access to health insurance except through a health exchange established pursuant to section 1311 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18031).

''(B) Veterans without service-connected disability who—

''(i) are not otherwise permitted to enroll in the system as of the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014; and

''(ii) as of the date of enrollment under this section, do not have access to health insurance except through a health exchange established pursuant to section 1311 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

''(3) A veteran who, after enrolling in the patient enrollment system pursuant to this subsection, obtains access to health insurance other than through a health exchange shall remain enrolled in the patient enrollment system notwithstanding obtaining access to such health insurance.

''(4) A veteran enrolled in the patient enrollment system pursuant to this subsection shall maintain the priority for care of the veteran at the time of enrollment unless and until a change in circumstances of the veteran results in a higher priority for care of the veteran under subsection (a).''.

(b) VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR ENROLLMENT.—

(1) USE OF INFORMATION ON HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 53 is amended by inserting after section 5318 the following new section:

''§ 5319. Review of reporting of health insurance coverage

''The Secretary shall notify each veteran who enrolls under subsection (d) of section 1705 of this title in the patient enrollment system of veterans under such section that information on the veteran's access to health insurance that is furnished to the Secretary for purposes of such enrollment may be compared with information obtained by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 6103(*l*)(23) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.''.

(B) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 53 is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''5319. Review of reporting of health insurance coverage.''.

(2) DISCLOSURE OF RETURN INFORMATION BY INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE.—Section 6103(*l*) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(23) DISCLOSURE OF CERTAIN RETURN INFORMATION FOR VERIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF VETERANS FOR ENROLLMENT IN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PATIENT ENROLLMENT SYSTEM.—

''(A) RETURN INFORMATION FROM INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE.—The Secretary shall, upon written request, disclose current return information from returns under section 6055 with respect to minimum essential coverage of individuals to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the purposes of verifying the eligibility of veterans for enrollment in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1705(d) of title 38.

''(B) RESTRICTION ON DISCLOSURE.—The Secretary shall disclose return information under subparagraph (A) only for purposes of, and to the extent necessary in, verifying the eligibility of veterans to enroll in the patient enrollment system described in that subparagraph.

''(C) RESTRICTION ON USE OF DISCLOSED INFORMATION.—Return information disclosed under subparagraph (A) may be used by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs only for the purposes of, and to the extent necessary in, verifying the eligibility of veterans to enroll in the patient enrollment system described in that subparagraph.''.

(c) PUBLIC NOTICE OF COMMENCEMENT OF ENROLLMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register, and shall make available to the public on an Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs, a notice regarding the date on which veterans covered by subsection (d) of section 1705 of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a) of this section), may commence enrollment in the patient enrollment system required by that section.

SEC. 302. FURTHER EXTENSION OF PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY FOR HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS OF COMBAT SERVICE DURING CERTAIN PERIODS OF HOSTILITIES AND WAR.

Section 1710(e)(3) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''the date that is five years before the date of the enactment of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, after a period of five years'' and inserting ''January 27, 2003, after a period of 10 years''; and

(2) in subparagraph (B), by striking ''more than five years'' and all that follows and inserting ''before January 28, 2003, and who did not enroll in the patient enrollment system under section 1705 of this title before January 28, 2008, after January 27, 2018.''.

SEC. 303. EXTENSION TO ALL VETERANS WITH A SERIOUS SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY OF ELIGIBILITY FOR PARTICIPATION IN FAMILY CAREGIVER PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1720G(a)(2)(B) is amended by striking ''on or after September 11, 2001''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on September 30, 2014.

SEC. 304. IMPROVED ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE IMMUNIZATIONS FOR VETERANS.

(a) INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS AS MEDICAL SERVICES.—

(1) COVERED BENEFIT.—Subparagraph (F) of section 1701(9) is amended to read as follows:

''(F) immunizations against infectious diseases, including each immunization on the recommended adult immunization schedule at the time such immunization is indicated on that schedule;''.

(2) RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE DEFINED.—Section 1701 is amended by adding after paragraph (9) the following new paragraph:

''(10) The term 'recommended adult immunization schedule' means the schedule established (and periodically reviewed and, as appropriate, revised) by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices established by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and delegated to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.''.

(b) INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS IN ANNUAL REPORT.—Section 1704(1)(A) is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by inserting after clause (ii) the following new clause:

''(iii) to provide veterans each immunization on the recommended adult immunization schedule at the time such immunization is indicated on that schedule.''.

(c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the development and implementation by the Department of Veterans Affairs of quality measures and metrics, including targets for compliance, to ensure that veterans receiving medical services under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, receive each immunization on the recommended adult immunization schedule at the time such immunization is indicated on that schedule.

(2) RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''recommended adult immunization schedule'' has the meaning given that term in section 1701(10) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(2).

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This subsection shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 305. EXPANSION OF PROVISION OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE AND SERVICES TO VETERANS.

(a) PROGRAM FOR PROVISION OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE AND SERVICES TO VETERANS.—Section 204(c) of the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 (Public Law 107–135; 115 Stat. 2459; 38 U.S.C. 1710 note) is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The program''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2) The program shall be carried out at not fewer than two medical centers or clinics in each Veterans Integrated Service Network by not later than one year after the effective date specified in section 305(c) of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, and at not fewer than 50 percent of all medical centers in each Veterans Integrated Service Network by not later than two years after such effective date.''.

(b) EXPANDED CHIROPRACTOR SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VETERANS.—

(1) MEDICAL SERVICES.—Paragraph (6) of section 1701 is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(H) Chiropractic services.''.

(2) REHABILITATIVE SERVICES.—Paragraph (8) of such section is amended by inserting ''chiropractic,'' after ''counseling,''.

(3) PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICES.—Paragraph (9) of such section is amended—

(A) by redesignating subparagraphs (F) through (K) as subparagraphs (G) through (L), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after subparagraph (E) the following new subparagraph (F):

''(F) periodic and preventive chiropractic examinations and services;''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section and the amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 306. MODIFICATION OF COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PERIOD OF SERVICE AT CAMP LEJEUNE, NORTH CAROLINA, FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR HOSPITAL CARE AND MEDICAL SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH EXPOSURE TO CONTAMINATED WATER.

(a) MODIFICATION.—Section 1710(e)(1)(F) is amended by striking ''January 1, 1957,'' and inserting ''August 1, 1953 (or such earlier date for the commencement of exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune as the Secretary, in consultation with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, shall specify),''.

(b) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register a notice of any earlier date for the commencement of exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for purposes of section 1710(e)(1)(F) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a).

SEC. 307. EXPANSION OF EMERGENCY TREATMENT REIMBURSEMENT FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1725(b)(2)(B) is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(i)'' after ''(B)'';

(2) by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(ii) the veteran was unable to receive care under this chapter within such 24-month period because of a waiting period imposed by the Department with respect to a new patient examination of such veteran.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 308. MODIFICATION OF DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY OF VETERANS FOR TREATMENT AS A LOW-INCOME FAMILY FOR PURPOSES OF ENROLLMENT IN THE PATIENT ENROLLMENT SYSTEM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) AREAS OF RESIDENCE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall modify the areas in which veterans reside as specified for purposes of determining whether veterans qualify for treatment as low-income families for enrollment in the patient enrollment system of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1705(a)(7) of title 38, United States Code, to meet the requirements as follows:

(1) Any area so specified shall be within only one State.

(2) Any area so specified shall be co-extensive with one or more counties (or similar political subdivisions) in the State concerned.

(b) VARIABLE INCOME THRESHOLDS.—The Secretary shall modify the thresholds for income as specified for purposes of determining whether veterans qualify for treatment as low-income families for enrollment in the patient enrollment system referred to in subsection (a) to meet the requirements as follows:

(1) There shall be one income threshold for each State, equal to the highest income threshold among the counties within such State.

(2) The calculation of the highest income threshold of a county shall be consistent with the calculation used for purposes of section 3(b) of the United States Housing Act of 1937 (42 U.S.C. 1437a(b)).

(3) The timing and methodology for implementing any modifications in geographic income thresholds pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be determined by the Secretary in such a manner as to permit the Department to build capacity for enrolling such additional veterans in the patient enrollment system of the Department as become eligible for enrollment as a result of such modifications, except that all required modifications shall be completed not later than five years after date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 309. EXTENSION OF SUNSET DATE REGARDING TRANSPORTATION OF INDIVIDUALS TO AND FROM FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REQUIREMENT OF REPORT.

(a) EXTENSION OF SUNSET DATE.—Subsection (a)(2) of section 111A is amended by striking ''December 31, 2014'' and inserting ''September 30, 2015''.

(b) FUNDING AVAILABLE.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) FUNDING.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 2014 and 2015 for the Department, $4,000,000 to carry out this section.''.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on—

(1) the efforts of the Secretary to carry out the transportation services required by section 111A(a) of title 38, United States Code;

(2) the utilization of those services by covered veterans; and

(3) the feasibility and advisability of the continuation of the provision of such services after September 30, 2015.

SEC. 310. COVERAGE OF COSTS OF CARE FOR VETERANS AT MEDICAL FOSTER HOMES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In conducting the medical foster home program pursuant to section 17.73 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may cover the costs associated with the care of veterans at medical foster homes.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 311. EXTENSION AND MODIFICATION OF PILOT PROGRAM ON ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) EXTENSION OF PROGRAM.—Subsection (a) of section 1705 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110–181; 38 U.S.C. 1710C note) is amended by striking ''a five-year'' and inserting ''an eight-year''.

(b) MODIFICATION OF LOCATIONS.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(2) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraphs:

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The pilot program shall be carried out at locations selected by the Secretary for purposes of the pilot program.

''(2) LOCATED IN SAME REGION AS POLYTRAUMA CENTERS.—Of the locations selected under paragraph (1), at least one location shall be in each health care region of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs that contains a polytrauma center of the Department of Veterans Affairs.''.

(c) MODIFICATION OF REPORT REQUIREMENTS.—Subsection (e) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(e) REPORTS.—

''(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, and not later than September 30 each year thereafter until 2018, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

''(B) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

''(i) The number of individuals that participated in the pilot program during the year preceding the submission of the report.

''(ii) The number of individuals that successfully completed the pilot program during the year preceding the submission of the report.

''(iii) The degree to which pilot program participants and family members of pilot program participants were satisfied with the pilot program.

''(iv) The interim findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the success of the pilot program and recommendations for improvement.

''(2) FINAL REPORT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the completion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a final report on the pilot program.

''(B) ELEMENTS.—The final report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

''(i) A description of the pilot program.

''(ii) An assessment of the utility of the activities under the pilot program in enhancing the rehabilitation, quality of life, and community reintegration of veterans with traumatic brain injury, including complex mild traumatic brain injury.

''(iii) Such recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate regarding improving the pilot program.''.

(d) MODIFICATION OF DEFINITIONS.—

(1) COMMUNITY-BASED BRAIN INJURY RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATIVE CARE SERVICES.—Such section is further amended—

(A) in the section heading, by striking ''**ASSISTED LIVING**''and inserting ''**COMMUNITY-BASED BRAIN INJURY RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATIVE CARE**'';

(B) in subsection (c), in the subsection heading, by striking ''ASSISTED LIVING'' and inserting ''COMMUNITY-BASED BRAIN INJURY RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATIVE CARE'';

(C) by striking ''assisted living'' each place it appears, and inserting ''community-based brain injury rehabilitative care''; and

(D) in subsection (f)(1), by striking ''and personal care'' and inserting ''rehabilitation, and personal care''.

(2) ELIGIBLE VETERAN.—Subsection (f)(3) of such section is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (C), by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon;

(B) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(E) has a traumatic brain injury that is classified as complex-mild to severe.''.

(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015 $46,000,000 to carry out the pilot program under section 1705 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110–181; 38 U.S.C. 1710C note), as amended by this section. The amount so authorized to be appropriated shall be available for obligation for the three-year period beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1, 2014.

SEC. 312. PROGRAM ON HEALTH PROMOTION FOR OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE VETERANS THROUGH SUPPORT OF FITNESS CENTER MEMBERSHIPS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, through the National Center for Preventive Health, carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of promoting health in covered veterans, including achieving a healthy weight and reducing risks of chronic disease, through support for fitness center membership.

(b) COVERED VETERANS.—For purposes of this section, a covered veteran is any veteran who—

(1) is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established and operated by the Secretary under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code;

(2) is determined by a clinician of the Department of Veterans Affairs to be overweight or obese as of the date of the commencement of the program; and

(3) resides in a location that is more than 15 minutes driving distance from a fitness center at a facility of the Department that would otherwise be available to the veteran for at least eight hours per day during five or more days per week.

(c) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The program shall be carried out during the two-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the program, the Secretary shall select—

(A) not less than five medical centers of the Department at which the Secretary shall cover the full reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of such centers; and

(B) not less than five medical centers of the Department at which the Secretary shall cover half the reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of such centers.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting locations for the program, the Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advisability of selecting locations in the following areas:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas in different geographic locations.

(e) PARTICIPATION.—

(1) MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS.—The number of covered veterans who may participate in the program at each location selected under subsection (d) may not exceed 100.

(2) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a covered veteran in the program shall be at the election of the covered veteran in consultation with a clinician of the Department.

(f) MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), in carrying out the program, the Secretary shall pay the following:

(A) The full reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of centers selected under subsection (d)(1)(A) who are participating in the program.

(B) Half the reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of centers selected under subsection (d)(1)(B) who are participating in the program.

(2) LIMITATION.—Payment for a fitness center membership of a covered veteran may not exceed $50 per month of membership.

(g) REPORTS.—

(1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the commencement of the program and not less frequently than once every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on activities carried out to implement the program, including outreach activities to veterans and community organizations.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program detailing—

(A) the findings and conclusions of the Secretary as a result of the program; and

(B) recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program.

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 313. PROGRAM ON HEALTH PROMOTION FOR VETERANS THROUGH ESTABLISHMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FITNESS FACILITIES.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of promoting health in covered veterans, including achieving a healthy weight, through establishment of Department of Veterans Affairs fitness facilities.

(b) COVERED VETERANS.—For purposes of this section, a covered veteran is any veteran who is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established and operated by the Secretary under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code.

(c) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the program by establishing fitness facilities in Department facilities as follows:

(A) In not fewer than five Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

(B) In not fewer than five outpatient clinics of the Department selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting locations for the program, the Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advisability of selecting locations in the following areas:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas in different geographic locations.

(e) LIMITATION ON EXPENSES.—In establishing and supporting a fitness facility in a facility of the Department under the program, the Secretary may expend amounts as follows:

(1) For establishment and support of a fitness facility in a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, not more than $60,000.

(2) For establishment and support of a fitness facility in an outpatient clinic of the Department, not more than $40,000.

(f) REPURPOSING OF PHYSICAL SPACE AND PURCHASES OF EQUIPMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (e), the Secretary may, in carrying out the program, repurpose existing physical space of the Department and purchase such fitness equipment and supplies as the Secretary considers appropriate for purposes of the program.

(2) REPURPOSING EXCEPTION.—Existing physical space used for the direct delivery of health care to patients may not be repurposed under paragraph (1).

(g) PROHIBITION ON ASSESSMENT OF USER FEES.—The Secretary may not assess a fee upon a covered veteran for use of a fitness facility established under the program.

(h) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a covered veteran in the program shall be at the election of the covered veteran.

(i) REPORTS.—

(1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the commencement of the program and not less frequently than once every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on activities carried out to implement the program, including outreach activities to veterans and community organizations.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program detailing—

(A) the findings and conclusions of the Secretary as a result of the program; and

(B) recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program.

(j) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle B—Health Care Administration

SEC. 321. EXTENSION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

Section 7619 is amended by striking ''December 31, 2014'' and inserting ''December 31, 2019''.

SEC. 322. EXPANSION OF AVAILABILITY OF PROSTHETIC AND ORTHOTIC CARE FOR VETERANS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OR EXPANSION OF ADVANCED DEGREE PROGRAMS TO EXPAND AVAILABILITY OF PROVISION OF CARE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall work with institutions of higher education to develop partnerships for the establishment or expansion of programs of advanced degrees in prosthetics and orthotics in order to improve and enhance the availability of high quality prosthetic and orthotic care for veterans.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth a plan for carrying out subsection (a). The Secretary shall develop the plan in consultation with veterans service organizations, institutions of higher education with accredited degree programs in prosthetics and orthotics, and representatives of the prosthetics and orthotics field.

(c) FUNDING.—

(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, $10,000,000 to carry out this section.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by paragraph (1) shall remain available for expenditure until September 30, 2017.

SEC. 323. CONTRACTING FOR HEALTH CARE.

(a) USE OF CAPITATION-BASED RESOURCE ALLOCATION IN ENTRY INTO CONTRACTS.—In entering into contracts for the furnishing of health care services under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (including under this title and the amendments made by this title), the Secretary shall use the capitation-based resource allocation model of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) PRIORITY FOR CONTRACTS WITH CERTAIN ENTITIES.—In entering into contracts for the furnishing of health care services under the laws administered by the Secretary, the Secretary shall afford a priority for entry into contracts for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Community Health Centers (CHCs), whenever appropriate.

(c) BEST PRACTICES.—The Secretary shall modify the guidance of the Department of Veterans Affairs on contracts for health care services in order to provide for the incorporation into such contracts of standardized requirements for such best practices under such contracts, including the following:

(1) Requirements that contracts provide the Department on a regular basis information on scheduling and appearance for appointments for health care on per-patient basis.

(2) Such other best practices requirements as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(d) FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER DEFINED.—In this section the term ''Federally Qualified Health Center'' means a Federally-qualified health center as defined in section 1905(l)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396d(l)(2)(B)).

SEC. 324. LIMITATION ON EXPANSION OF DIALYSIS PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) LIMITATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall not expand the dialysis pilot program to, or expand the capacity to provide additional dialysis care at, any facility owned or leased by the Department that is not an initial facility until after the date that—

(1) the Secretary has implemented the dialysis pilot program at each initial facility for a period of not less than two years;

(2) an independent analysis of the dialysis pilot program has been conducted at each initial facility, including a consideration and comparison of factors including—

(A) the ability of veterans to access care under the dialysis pilot program;

(B) the quality of care provided under the dialysis pilot program; and

(C) the satisfaction of veterans who have received treatment under the dialysis pilot program; and

(3) the report required by subsection (b) has been submitted.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the completion of the independent analysis required by subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that—

(1) includes the results of that independent analysis; and

(2) addresses any recommendations with respect to the dialysis pilot program provided in a report prepared by the Government Accountability Office.

(c) UTILIZATION OF EXISTING DIALYSIS RESOURCES.—In order to increase the access of veterans to dialysis care and decrease the travel time of such veterans to receive such care, the Secretary shall fully utilize existing dialysis resources of the Department, including any community dialysis provider with which the Department has entered into a contract or agreement for the provision of such care.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) DIALYSIS PILOT PROGRAM.—The term ''dialysis pilot program'' means the pilot demonstration program established by the Secretary in 2009 to provide dialysis care to patients at certain outpatient facilities operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) INITIAL FACILITY.—The term ''initial facility'' means one of the four outpatient facilities identified by the Secretary to participate in the dialysis pilot program prior to the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 325. REQUIREMENT FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICY ON REPORTING CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES AT FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 73 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7330B. Reporting of infectious diseases

''(a) REPORTING.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Department has in effect an up-to-date policy on reporting a notifiable infectious disease diagnosed at a facility under the jurisdiction of the Secretary in accordance with the provisions of State and local law in effect where such facility is located.

''(b) NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASE.—For purposes of this section, a notifiable infectious disease is any infectious disease that is—

''(1) on the list of nationally notifiable diseases published by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; or

''(2) covered by a provision of law of a State that requires the reporting of infectious diseases.

''(c) PERFORMANCE MEASURES.—The Secretary shall develop performance measures to assess whether and to what degree the directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks and Department medical centers are complying with the policy required by subsection (a).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7330A the following new item:

''7330B. Reporting of infectious diseases.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 326. INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS AND MEDICAL CENTERS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) CONTRACT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into a contract with an independent third-party to perform the services covered by this section.

(2) TIMING.—The Secretary shall seek to enter into the contract described in paragraph (1) not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) INDEPENDENT STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Under a contract between the Secretary and an independent third-party under this section, the third party shall carry out a study—

(A) to assess the organizational structures of medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) to improve succession planning among key leadership roles at Veterans Integrated Service Networks and medical centers of the Department.

(2) MATTERS STUDIED AND PROPOSED.—In carrying out the study, the third party shall—

(A) assess whether the organizational structure of the medical centers of the Department is effective for the furnishing of medical services, addressing issues that arise regarding the furnishing of medical services, and addressing standard business operations;

(B) propose one organizational chart for Department medical centers with a common set of base position descriptions;

(C) propose a base set of medical positions that should be filled to ensure that the health care provided to veterans by the Department is of good quality; and

(D) identify which key leadership positions at Veterans Integrated Service Networks and Department medical centers should have succession plans and propose how to implement such plans.

(3) TIMING.—The third party shall complete the study under this section not later than 270 days after entering into the contract described in subsection (a).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date on which the third party completes the study under this section, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the results of such study.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 327. REQUIREMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH NEXT UPDATE OF CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The first update of the Strategic Plan Refresh for Fiscal Years 2012 through 2014 of the Office of Rural Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs after the date of the enactment of this Act, whether an update or refresh of such Strategic Plan Refresh or a strategic plan to supersede such Strategic Plan Refresh, shall be prepared in accordance with this section.

(2) CONSULTATION.—The Director of the Office of Rural Health shall prepare the update in consultation with the following:

(A) The Director of the Health Care Retention and Recruitment Office of the Department.

(B) The Director of the Office of Quality and Performance of the Department.

(C) The Director of the Office of Care Coordination Services of the Department.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The update described in subsection (a) shall include, for the period covered by the update, the following:

(1) Goals and objectives for the recruitment and retention by the Veterans Health Administration of health care personnel in rural areas.

(2) Goals and objectives for ensuring timeliness and improving quality in the delivery of health care services by the Veterans Health Administration in rural areas through contract and fee-basis providers.

(3) Goals and objectives for the implementation, expansion, and enhanced use of telemedicine services by the Veterans Health Administration in rural areas, including through coordination with other appropriate offices of the Department.

(4) Goals and objectives for ensuring the full and effective use of mobile outpatient clinics by the Veterans Health Administration for the provision of health care services in rural areas, including goals and objectives for the use of such clinics on a fully mobile basis and for encouraging health care providers who provide services through such clinics to do so in rural areas.

(5) Procedures for soliciting from each Veterans Health Administration facility that serves a rural area the following:

(A) A statement of the clinical capacity of such facility.

(B) The procedures of such facility in the event of a medical, surgical, or mental health emergency outside the scope of the clinical capacity of such facility.

(C) The procedures and mechanisms of such facility for the provision and coordination of health care for women veterans, including procedures and mechanisms for coordination with local hospitals and health care facilities, oversight of primary care and fee-basis care, and management of specialty care.

(6) Goals and objectives for the modification of the funding allocation mechanisms of the Office of Rural Health in order to ensure that the Office distributes funds to components of the Department to best achieve the goals and objectives of the Office and in a timely manner.

(7) Goals and objectives for the coordination of, and sharing of resources with respect to, the provision of health care services to veterans in rural areas between the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, the Indian Health Service of the Department of Health and Human Services, and other Federal agencies, as appropriate and prudent.

(8) Specific milestones for the achievement of the goals and objectives developed for the update.

(9) Procedures for ensuring the effective implementation of the update.

(c) TRANSMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the issuance of the update described in subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall transmit the update to Congress, together with such comments and recommendations in connection with the update as the Secretary considers appropriate.

SEC. 328. REPORT ON PROVISION OF TELEMEDICINE SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the following:

(1) Issues that may be impeding the provision by the Department of Veterans Affairs of telemedicine services for veterans, including the following:

(A) Statutory or regulatory restrictions.

(B) Licensure or credentialing issues for any provider practicing telemedicine with veterans who live in a different State than the provider.

(C) Limited broadband access in rural areas.

(D) Limited information technology resources or capabilities.

(E) Long distances veterans must travel to access a facility or clinic with telemedicine capabilities.

(F) Insufficient liability protection for providers.

(G) Reimbursement issues faced by providers.

(H) Travel limitations for providers that are unaffiliated with the Department and are participating or seeking to participate in a telemedicine program of the Department.

(2) Actions taken to address the issues identified in paragraph (1).

(3) An update on efforts by the Department to carry out the initiative of teleconsultation for the provision of remote mental health and traumatic brain injury assessments required by section 1709A of title 38, United States Code.

(4) An update on efforts by the Department to offer training opportunities in telemedicine to medical residents, as required by section 108(b) of the Janey Ensminger Act (Public Law 112–154; 38 U.S.C. 7406 note).

(5) An update on efforts by the Department to, in partnership with primary care providers, install video cameras and instruments to monitor weight, blood pressure, and other vital statistics in the homes of patients.

(b) TELEMEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''telemedicine'' means the use by a health care provider of telecommunications to assist in the diagnosis or treatment of a patient's medical condition.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 329. DESIGNATION OF CORPORAL MICHAEL J. CRESCENZ DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs located at 3900 Woodland Avenue in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the ''Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in any law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the medical center referred to in subsection (a) shall be considered to be a reference to the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Subtitle C—Complementary and Alternative Medicine

SEC. 331. EXPANSION OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ON AND DELIVERY OF COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE TO VETERANS.

(a) DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN TO EXPAND RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND DELIVERY.—Not later than six months after the effective date specified in subsection (f), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop a plan to expand materially and substantially the scope of research and education on, and delivery and integration of, complementary and alternative medicine services into the health care services provided to veterans.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The plan required by subsection (a) shall provide for the following:

(1) Research on the following:

(A) The comparative effectiveness of various complementary and alternative medicine therapies.

(B) Approaches to integrating complementary and alternative medicine services into other health care services provided by the Department.

(2) Education and training for health care professionals of the Department on the following:

(A) Complementary and alternative medicine services selected by the Secretary for purposes of the plan.

(B) Appropriate uses of such services.

(C) Integration of such services into the delivery of health care to veterans.

(3) Research, education, and clinical activities on complementary and alternative medicine at centers of innovation at Department medical centers.

(4) Identification or development of metrics and outcome measures to evaluate

the provision and integration of complementary and alternative medicine services into the delivery of health care to veterans.

(5) Integration and delivery of complementary and alternative medicine services with other health care services provided by the Department.

(c) CONSULTATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with the following:

(A) The Director of the National Center on Complementary and Alternative Medicine of the National Institutes of Health.

(B) The Commissioner of Food and Drugs.

(C) Institutions of higher education, private research institutes, and individual researchers with extensive experience in complementary and alternative medicine and the integration of complementary and alternative medicine practices into the delivery of health care.

(D) Nationally recognized providers of complementary and alternative medicine.

(E) Such other officials, entities, and individuals with expertise on complementary and alternative medicine as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) SCOPE OF CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall undertake consultation under paragraph (1) in carrying out subsection (a) with respect to the following:

(A) To develop the plan.

(B) To identify specific complementary and alternative medicine practices that, on the basis of research findings or promising clinical interventions, are appropriate to include as services to veterans.

(C) To identify barriers to the effective provision and integration of complementary and alternative medicine services into the delivery of health care to veterans, and to identify mechanisms for overcoming such barriers.

(d) FUNDING.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.

(e) COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''complementary and alternative medicine'' shall have the meaning given that term in regulations the Secretary shall prescribe for purposes of this section, which shall, to the degree practicable, be consistent with the meaning given such term by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 332. PROGRAM ON INTEGRATION OF COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE WITHIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTERS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) carry out, through the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of integrating the delivery of complementary and alternative medicine services selected by the Secretary with other health care services provided by the Department for veterans with mental health conditions, chronic pain conditions, other chronic conditions, and such other conditions as the Secretary determines appropriate; and

(2) in developing the program, identify and resolve barriers to the provision of complementary and alternative medicine services selected by the Secretary and the integration of those services with other health care services provided by the Department.

(b) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the effective date specified in subsection (j).

(c) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the program at not fewer than 15 separate Department medical centers.

(2) POLYTRAUMA CENTERS.—Not less than two of the medical centers designated under paragraph (1) shall be located at polytrauma rehabilitation centers of the Department.

(3) SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.—In carrying out the program, the Secretary shall select locations that include the following areas:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas representing different geographic locations, such as census tracts established by the Bureau of the Census.

(d) PROVISION OF SERVICES.—Under the program, the Secretary shall provide covered services to covered veterans by integrating complementary and alternative medicine services with other services provided by the Department at the medical centers designated under subsection (c)(1).

(e) COVERED VETERANS.—For purposes of the program, a covered veteran is any veteran who—

(1) has a mental health condition diagnosed by a clinician of the Department;

(2) experiences chronic pain; or

(3) has a chronic condition being treated by a clinician of the Department.

(f) COVERED SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of the program, covered services are services consisting of complementary and alternative medicine as selected by the Secretary.

(2) ADMINISTRATION OF SERVICES.—Covered services shall be administered under the program as follows:

(A) Covered services shall be administered by clinicians employed by the Secretary for purposes of this section who, to the extent practicable, shall provide services consisting of complementary and alternative medicine, including those clinicians who solely provide such services.

(B) Covered services shall be included as part of the Patient Aligned Care Teams initiative of the Office of Patient Care Services, Primary Care Program Office, in coordination with the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation.

(C) Covered services shall be made available to both—

(i) covered veterans with mental health conditions, pain conditions, or chronic conditions described in subsection (e) who have received conventional treatments from the Department for such conditions; and

(ii) covered veterans with mental health conditions, pain conditions, or chronic conditions described in subsection (e) who have not received conventional treatments from the Department for such conditions.

(g) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a veteran in the program shall be at the election of the veteran and in consultation with a clinician of the Department.

(h) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—

(1) QUARTERLY REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the commencement of the program and not less frequently than once every 90 days thereafter for the duration of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the efforts of the Secretary to carry out the program, including a description of the outreach conducted by the Secretary to veterans and community organizations to inform such organizations about the program.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program, including with respect to—

(I) the utilization and efficacy of the complementary and alternative medicine services established under the program;

(II) an assessment of the benefit of the program to covered veterans in mental health diagnoses, pain management, and treatment of chronic illness; and

(III) the comparative effectiveness of various complementary and alternative medicine therapies.

(ii) Barriers identified under subsection (a)(2) that were not resolved.

(iii) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(i) COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''complementary and alternative medicine'' shall have the meaning given that term in section 331(e) of this Act.

(j) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 333. STUDIES OF BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED BY VETERANS IN RECEIVING, AND ADMINISTRATORS AND CLINICIANS IN PROVIDING, COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE SERVICES FURNISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) STUDIES REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct comprehensive studies of the barriers encountered by veterans in receiving, and administrators and clinicians in providing, complementary and alternative medicine services furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) STUDIES CONDUCTED.—

(A) VETERANS.—In conducting the study of veterans, the Secretary shall—

(i) survey veterans who seek or receive hospital care or medical services furnished by the Department, as well as veterans who do not seek or receive such care or services;

(ii) administer the survey to a representative sample of veterans from each Veterans Integrated Service Network; and

(iii) ensure that the sample of veterans surveyed is of sufficient size for the study results to be statistically significant.

(B) ADMINISTRATORS AND CLINICIANS.—In conducting the study of clinicians and administrators, the Secretary shall—

(i) survey administrators of the Department who are involved in the provision of health care services;

(ii) survey clinicians that have provided complementary and alternative medicine services through the program established under section 332 of this Act, after those clinicians have provided those services through such program for at least 90 days; and

(iii) administer the survey to administrators under clause (i)—

(I) before the introduction of complementary and alternative medicine services through such program; and

(II) not earlier than 90 days after the introduction of complementary and alternative medicine services through such program.

(b) ELEMENTS OF STUDIES.—

(1) VETERANS.—In conducting the study of veterans required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall study the following:

(A) The perceived barriers associated with obtaining complementary and alternative medicine services from the Department.

(B) The satisfaction of veterans with complementary and alternative medicine services in primary care.

(C) The degree to which veterans are aware of eligibility requirements for, and the scope of services available under, complementary and alternative medicine services furnished by the Department.

(D) The effectiveness of outreach to veterans on the availability of complementary and alternative medicine for veterans.

(E) Such other barriers as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) ADMINISTRATORS AND CLINICIANS.—In conducting the study of administrators and clinicians required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall study the following:

(A) The extent of the integration of complementary and alternative medicine services within the services provided by the Department.

(B) The perception by administrators and clinicians of the structural and attitudinal barriers to the delivery of high quality complementary and alternative medicine services by the Department.

(C) Strategies that have been used to reduce or eliminate such barriers and the results of such strategies.

(D) The satisfaction of administrators and clinicians regarding the integration of complementary and alternative medicine services within the services provided by the Department.

(E) The perception by administrators and clinicians of the value of specific complementary and alternative medicine services for inpatient and outpatient veteran populations.

(c) DISCHARGE BY CONTRACT.—The Secretary shall enter into a contract with a qualified independent entity or organization to carry out the studies required by this section.

(d) MANDATORY REVIEW OF DATA BY THE NATIONAL RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ensure that the head of the National Research Advisory Council reviews the results of the studies conducted under this section.

(2) SUBMITTAL OF FINDINGS.—The head of the National Research Advisory Council shall submit findings with respect to the studies to the Under Secretary for Health and to other pertinent program offices within the Department with responsibilities relating to health care services for veterans.

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the status of the implementation of this section.

(2) REPORT ON STUDY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 45 days after the date of the completion of the study, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the study required by subsection (a).

(B) CONTENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) Recommendations for such administrative and legislative proposals and actions as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(ii) The findings of the head of the National Research Advisory Council and of the Under Secretary for Health.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, $2,000,000 to carry out this section.

(g) COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''complementary and alternative medicine'' shall have the meaning given that term in section 331(e) of this Act.

SEC. 334. PROGRAM ON USE OF WELLNESS PROGRAMS AS COMPLEMENTARY APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program through the award of grants to public or private nonprofit entities to assess the feasibility and advisability of using wellness programs to complement the provision of mental health care to veterans and family members eligible for counseling under section 1712A(a)(1)(C) of title 38, United States Code.

(2) MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED.—The program shall be carried out so as to assess the following:

(A) Means of improving coordination between Federal, State, local, and community providers of health care in the provision of mental health care to veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(B) Means of enhancing outreach, and coordination of outreach, by and among providers of health care referred to in subparagraph (A) on the mental health care services available to veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(C) Means of using wellness programs of providers of health care referred to in subparagraph (A) as complements to the provision by the Department of Veterans Affairs of mental health care to veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(D) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) are effective in enhancing the quality of life and well-being of veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(E) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) are effective in increasing the adherence of veterans described in paragraph (1) to the primary mental health services provided such veterans by the Department.

(F) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) have an impact on the sense of wellbeing of veterans described in paragraph (1) who receive primary mental health services from the Department.

(G) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) are effective in encouraging veterans receiving health care from the Department to adopt a more healthy lifestyle.

(b) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the program for a period of three years beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program at facilities of the Department providing mental health care services to veterans and family members described in subsection (a)(1).

(d) GRANT PROPOSALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A public or private nonprofit entity seeking the award of a grant under this section shall submit an application therefor to the Secretary in such form and in such manner as the Secretary may require.

(2) APPLICATION CONTENTS.—Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A plan to coordinate activities under the program, to the extent possible, with the Federal, State, and local providers of services for veterans to enhance the following:

(i) Awareness by veterans of benefits and health care services provided by the Department.

(ii) Outreach efforts to increase the use by veterans of services provided by the Department.

(iii) Educational efforts to inform veterans of the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle.

(B) A statement of understanding from the entity submitting the application that, if selected, such entity will be required to report to the Secretary periodically on standardized data and other performance data necessary to evaluate individual outcomes and to facilitate evaluations among entities participating in the program.

(C) Other requirements that the Secretary may prescribe.

(e) GRANT USES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A public or private nonprofit entity awarded a grant under this section shall use the award for purposes prescribed by the Secretary.

(2) ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND FAMILY.—In carrying out the purposes prescribed by the Secretary in paragraph (1), a public or private nonprofit entity awarded a grant under this section shall use the award to furnish services only to individuals specified in section 1712A(a)(1)(C) of title 38, United States Code.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the commencement of the program, and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the program.

(B) REPORT ELEMENTS.—Each report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program during the 180-day period preceding the report.

(ii) An assessment of the benefits of the program to veterans and their family members during the 180-day period preceding the report.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the end of the program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report detailing the recommendations of the Secretary as to the advisability of continuing or expanding the program.

(g) WELLNESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''wellness'' has the meaning given that term in regulations prescribed by the Secretary.

Subtitle D—Mental Health Care

SEC. 341. INCLUSION OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HEALTH PERSONNEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the education and training program required under section 7302(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall include education and training of marriage and family therapists and licensed professional mental health counselors.

(b) FUNDING.—The Secretary shall apportion funding for the education and training program equally among the professions included in the program.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 342. EDUCATION PROGRAM AND PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR FAMILY MEMBERS AND CAREGIVERS OF VETERANS WITH MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS.

(a) PROGRAMS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish an education program (in this section referred to as the ''education program'') and a peer support program (in this section referred to as the ''peer support program'') for the education and training of family members and caregivers of eligible veterans with mental health disorders.

(2) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(A) FAMILY MEMBER; CAREGIVER.—The terms ''family member'' and ''caregiver'' have the meaning given those terms in section 1720G(d) of title 38, United States Code.

(B) ELIGIBLE VETERAN.—The term ''eligible veteran'' means a veteran who is enrolled in the health care system established under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code.

(b) EDUCATION PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Under the education program, the Secretary shall provide a course of education to family members and caregivers of eligible veterans on matters relating to coping with mental health disorders in veterans.

(2) DURATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The education program shall be carried out during the four-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the education program.

(B) AUTHORITY FOR EXTENSION.—The Secretary may extend the duration of the education program for an additional four years.

(3) LOCATIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as required by subparagraph (D), the Secretary shall carry out the education program at the following facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs:

(i) Not less than 10 medical centers of the Department.

(ii) Not less than 10 clinics of the Department.

(iii) Not less than 10 Vet Centers (as defined in section 1712A(h) of title 38, United States Code).

(B) SOLICITATION OF APPLICATIONS.—In selecting locations for the education program, the Secretary shall solicit applications from eligible facilities of the Department that are interested in carrying out the education program.

(C) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting locations for the education program, the Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advisability of selecting locations in the following areas:

(i) Rural areas.

(ii) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty installation.

(iii) Areas in different geographic locations.

(D) EXPANSION OF LOCATIONS.—Not later than two years after the date of the commencement of the education program, the Secretary shall expand the number of facilities at which the Secretary is carrying out the education program to include the following:

(i) Not less than 10 additional medical centers of the Department.

(ii) Not less than 10 additional clinics of the Department.

(iii) Not less than 10 additional Vet Centers.

(4) CONTRACTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the education program, the Secretary shall enter into contracts with qualified entities described in subparagraph (B) to offer the course of education described in paragraph (5) to family members and caregivers of eligible veterans and covered veterans.

(B) QUALIFIED ENTITY DESCRIBED.—A qualified entity described in this subparagraph is a non-profit entity with experience in mental health education and outreach, including work with children, teens, and young adults, that—

(i) uses high quality, relevant, and age-appropriate information in educational programming, materials, and coursework, including such programming, materials, and coursework for children, teens, and young adults; and

(ii) works with agencies, departments, nonprofit mental health organizations, early childhood educators, and mental health providers to develop educational programming, materials, and coursework.

(C) PRIORITY.—In entering into contracts under this paragraph, the Secretary shall give priority to qualified entities that, to the maximum extent practicable, use Internet technology for the delivery of course content in an effort to expand the availability of support services, especially in rural areas.

(5) ELEMENTS.—The course of education described in this paragraph shall consist of not less than 10 weeks of education and shall include the following:

(A) General education on different mental health disorders, including information to improve understanding of the experiences of individuals suffering from those disorders.

(B) Techniques for handling crisis situations and administering mental health first aid to individuals suffering from mental health disorders.

(C) Techniques for coping with the stress of living with someone with a mental health disorder.

(D) Information on additional services available for family members and caregivers through the Department or community organizations and providers related to mental health disorders.

(E) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(6) INSTRUCTORS.—

(A) TRAINING.—Each instructor of the course of education described in paragraph (5) shall maintain a level of proficiency in the course of education as determined by the Secretary, and shall submit proof of that level of proficiency to the Secretary at such time and in such manner as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(B) INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THE COURSE AS INSTRUCTORS.—Commencing as of the date that is two years after the date of the commencement of the education program, any individual who has successfully completed the course of education described in paragraph (5) and has successfully completed such additional training as is required for instructors pursuant to subparagraph (A) may act as an instructor in the course of education.

(c) PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Under the peer support program, the Secretary shall provide peer support to family members and caregivers of eligible veterans on matters relating to coping with mental health disorders in veterans.

(2) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall provide peer support under the peer support program at each location at which the Secretary provides education under the education program.

(3) ELEMENTS.—Peer support under the peer support program shall consist of meetings in group settings between a peer support coordinator under paragraph (4) and family members and caregivers of eligible veterans on matters relating to coping with mental health disorders in veterans. At each location, those meetings shall be conducted not less often than twice each calendar quarter.

(4) PEER SUPPORT COORDINATOR.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, acting through the director of each participating facility, may select an individual who has successfully completed the course of education described in subsection (b)(5) to serve as a peer support coordinator for each such facility to carry out the peer support program.

(B) PROFICIENCY OF INSTRUCTORS.—Each peer support coordinator shall maintain a level of proficiency in peer support as determined by the Secretary, and shall submit proof of that level of proficiency to the Secretary at such time and in such manner as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(d) SURVEYS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct a comprehensive and statistically significant survey of the satisfaction of individuals that have participated in the course of education described in subsection (b)(5) and individuals that have participated in the peer support program that includes the following:

(A) The general satisfaction of those individuals with the education and assistance provided in the education program and the peer support program.

(B) The perceived effectiveness of the education program and the peer support program in providing education and assistance that is useful for those individuals.

(C) The applicability of the education program and the peer support program to the issues faced by those individuals.

(D) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(E) A representative sample of the information required by subparagraphs (A) through (D) from each Veterans Integrated Service Network that is participating in the education program and the peer support program.

(2) COMPILATION OF INFORMATION.—The information compiled as a result of the surveys required by paragraph (1) shall be included in the annual report required by subsection (e)(1).

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of the education program and not later than September 30 each year thereafter until 2017, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the education program and the peer support program.

(B) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The number of individuals that participated in the course of education described in subsection (b)(5) during the year preceding the submission of the report.

(ii) The number of individuals that participated in the peer support program during the year preceding the submission of the report.

(iii) A detailed analysis of the surveys conducted under subsection (d) with respect to the individuals described in clause (i) and (ii).

(iv) The degree to which veterans and family members and caregivers of veterans are aware of the eligibility requirements for enrollment in the education program and the peer support program.

(v) Any plans for expansion of the education program and the peer support program.

(vi) The interim findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the success of the education program and the peer support program.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the completion of the education program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the feasibility and advisability of continuing the education program and the peer support program.

(B) ELEMENTS.—The report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) A detailed analysis of the surveys conducted under subsection (d).

(ii) The feasibility and advisability of continuing the education program without entering into contracts for the course of education described in subsection (b)(5) and instead using peer support coordinators selected under subsection (c)(4) as instructors of the course of education.

(iii) The feasibility and advisability of expanding the education program and the peer support program.

SEC. 343. REPORT ON PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF CERTAIN VETERANS AT FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the feasibility and advisability of providing services under the program established by section 304(a) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1712A note) at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 344. ANNUAL REPORT ON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and not later than September 30 each year thereafter until the completion of the pilot program described in subsection (b), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on that pilot program.

(b) PILOT PROGRAM DESCRIBED.—The pilot program described in this subsection is the pilot program conducted by the Veterans Health Administration to connect medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs with community-based mental health care providers and substance abuse treatment providers for the purpose of assisting in the treatment of veterans with mental health disorders, commonly known as the ''Community Mental Health Partnership Pilot''.

(c) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) The number of sites participating in the pilot program.

(2) The number of individuals participating in the pilot program at each site.

(3) A detailed assessment of the effectiveness of, the participation of veterans in, and the satisfaction of veterans with the pilot program.

(4) An analysis of barriers to the effectiveness of, the participation of veterans in, and the satisfaction of veterans with the pilot program.

(5) A description of the plans of the Secretary to conduct outreach and provide information to veterans and community mental health providers with respect to the pilot program.

(6) A description of any plans to expand the pilot program, including plans that focus on the unique needs of veterans located in rural areas.

(7) An explanation of how the care provided under the pilot program is consistent with the minimum clinical mental health guidelines promulgated by the Veterans Health Administration, including clinical guidelines contained in the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook of such Administration.

Subtitle E—Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement

SEC. 351. RESTORATIVE DENTAL SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1710(c) is amended—

(1) in the second sentence—

(A) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively; and

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively;

(2) by inserting ''(1)'' after ''(c)'';

(3) by striking ''The Secretary'' and inserting the following:

''(2) The Secretary''; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) In addition to the dental services, treatment, and appliances authorized to be furnished by paragraph (2), the Secretary may furnish dental services and treatment, and dental appliances, needed to restore functioning in a veteran that is lost as a result of any services or treatment furnished under this subsection.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 352. PILOT PROGRAM ON EXPANSION OF FURNISHING OF DENTAL CARE TO ALL ENROLLED VETERANS.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Commencing not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of furnishing dental care to veterans enrolled in the system of patient enrollment under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code, who are not eligible for dental services and treatment, and related dental appliances, under current authorities.

(b) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the pilot program.

(c) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the pilot program at not fewer than 16 locations as follows:

(A) Four Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers with an established dental clinic.

(B) Four Department medical centers with a current contract for the furnishing of dental care.

(C) Four Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) with space available for the furnishing of services and treatment under the pilot program.

(D) Four facilities selected from among Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Indian Health Service facilities with established dental clinics, of which—

(i) at least one facility shall be such an Indian Health Service facility; and

(ii) any Indian Health Service facility so selected shall be selected in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting locations for the pilot program, the Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advisability of selecting locations in each of the following:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas representing different geographic locations, such as census tracts established by the Bureau of Census.

(d) LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING VETERANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The total number of eligible veterans who may participate in the pilot program may not exceed 30,000.

(2) DISTRIBUTION OF LIMITATION.—In applying the limitation in paragraph (1) to the pilot program, the Secretary shall distribute the limitation across and among locations selected for the pilot program in a manner that takes appropriate account of the size and need of veterans for dental services at each such location.

(e) SCOPE OF SERVICES.—The dental services and treatment furnished to veterans under the pilot program shall be consistent with the dental services and treatment furnished by the Secretary to veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 100 percent disabling under the laws administered by the Secretary.

(f) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a veteran in the pilot program shall be at the election of the veteran.

(g) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT OF SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The total amount the Secretary may expend furnishing dental services and treatment to a veteran participating in the pilot program during any one-year period may not exceed such amount as the Secretary determines appropriate. The amount so determined may not be less than $1,000.

(2) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall make the determination under paragraph (1)—

(A) in consultation with the Director of the Indian Health Service; and

(B) in consultation with the Director of the Health Resources and Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services if one or more Federally Qualified Health Center is selected as a location for the pilot program under subsection (c)(1)(D).

(h) COPAYMENTS.—The Secretary may collect copayments for dental services and treatment furnished under the pilot program in accordance with authorities on the collection of copayments for medical care of veterans under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code.

(i) PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) NOTICE TO ELIGIBLE VETERANS ON PILOT PROGRAM.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary shall inform all veterans eligible to participate in the pilot program of the services and treatment available under the pilot program.

(2) CONTRACTS.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary may enter into contracts with appropriate entities for the provision of dental services and treatment under the pilot program. Each such contract shall specify performance standards and metrics and processes for ensuring compliance of the contractor concerned with such performance standards.

(j) REPORTS.—

(1) PRELIMINARY REPORTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than each of 540 days and three years after the date of the commencement of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) A description of the implementation and operation of the pilot program.

(ii) The number of veterans receiving services and treatment under the pilot program, and a description of the dental services and treatment furnished to such veterans.

(iii) An analysis of the costs and benefits of the pilot program, including a comparison of costs and benefits by location type.

(iv) An assessment of the impact of the pilot program on medical care, wellness, employability, and perceived quality of life of veterans.

(v) The current findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the pilot program.

(vi) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the pilot program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the pilot program.

(ii) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the pilot program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(k) FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER DEFINED.—In this section the term ''Federally Qualified Health Center'' means a Federally-qualified health center as defined in section 1905(l)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396d(l)(2)(B)).

(l) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 353. PROGRAM ON EDUCATION TO PROMOTE DENTAL HEALTH IN VETERANS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program of education to promote dental health for veterans who are enrolled in the system of patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in the program shall be deemed to alter or revise the eligibility of any veteran for dental care under the laws administered by the Secretary.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The program required by subsection (a) shall provide education for veterans on the following:

(1) The association between dental health and overall health and well-being.

(2) Proper techniques for dental care.

(3) Signs and symptoms of commonly occurring dental conditions.

(4) Treatment options for commonly occurring dental issues.

(5) Options for obtaining access to dental care, including information on eligibility for dental care through the Department and on purchasing private dental insurance.

(6) Available and accessible options for obtaining low or no-cost dental care, including through dental schools and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

(7) Such other matters relating to dental health as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide educational materials to veterans under the program required by subsection (a) through a variety of mechanisms, including the following:

(A) The availability and distribution of print materials at Department facilities (including at medical centers, clinics, Vet Centers, and readjustment counseling centers) and to providers (including members of Patient Aligned Care Teams).

(B) The availability and distribution of materials over the Internet, including through webinars and My Health *e*Vet.

(C) Presentations of information, including both small group and large group presentations.

(2) SELECTION OF MECHANISMS.—In selecting mechanisms for purposes of this subsection, the Secretary shall select mechanisms designed to maximize the number of veterans who receive education under the program.

(d) FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER DEFINED.—In this section the term ''Federally Qualified Health Center'' means a Federally-qualified health center as defined in section 1905(l)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396d(l)(2)(B)).

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 354. INFORMATION ON DENTAL SERVICES FOR INCLUSION IN ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS UNDER DENTAL INSURANCE PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall expand the dental insurance pilot program established by section 17.169 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, to establish a mechanism by which private sector dental care providers shall forward to the Department of Veterans Affairs information on dental care furnished to individuals under the pilot program for inclusion in the electronic medical records of the Department with respect to such individuals.

(b) CONSTRUCTION WITH CURRENT PILOT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to revise eligibility for participation in, or the locations of, the pilot program referred to in subsection (a).

(2) DURATION.—The Secretary may continue the pilot program for two years in addition to the duration otherwise provided for the pilot program in section 17.169 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, if the Secretary determines that the continuation is needed to assess the mechanism required by subsection (a).

(3) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN MECHANISM.—The participation in the mechanism required by subsection (a) of an individual otherwise participating in the pilot program shall be at the election of the individual.

(c) INCLUSION OF INFORMATION ON MECHANISM IN REPORTS.—Each report to Congress on the pilot program after the date of the commencement of the mechanism required by subsection (a) shall include information on the mechanism, including a current assessment of the feasability and advisability of using the mechanism to include information on dental care furnished individuals in the electronic medical records of the Department with respect to such individuals.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 355. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015 $305,000,000 to carry out this subtitle and the amendments made by this subtitle. The amount so authorized to be appropriated shall be available for obligation for the five-year period beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle F—Health Care Related to Sexual Trauma

SEC. 361. EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SEXUAL TRAUMA COUNSELING AND TREATMENT TO VETERANS ON INACTIVE DUTY TRAINING.

Section 1720D(a)(1) is amended by striking ''or active duty for training'' and inserting '', active duty for training, or inactive duty training''.

SEC. 362. PROVISION OF COUNSELING AND TREATMENT FOR SEXUAL TRAUMA BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) EXPANSION OF COVERAGE TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.—Subsection (a) of section 1720D is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3);

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2)(A) In operating the program required by paragraph (1), the Secretary may, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, provide counseling and care and services to members of the Armed Forces (including members of the National Guard and Reserves) on active duty to overcome psychological trauma described in that paragraph.

''(B) A member described in subparagraph (A) shall not be required to obtain a referral before receiving counseling and care and services under this paragraph.''; and

(3) in paragraph (3), as redesignated by paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking ''a veteran'' and inserting ''an individual''; and

(B) by striking ''that veteran'' each place it appears and inserting ''that individual''.

(b) INFORMATION TO MEMBERS ON AVAILABILITY OF COUNSELING AND SERVICES.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended—

(1) by striking ''to veterans'' each place it appears; and

(2) in paragraph (3), by inserting ''members of the Armed Forces and'' before ''individuals''.

(c) INCLUSION OF MEMBERS IN REPORTS ON COUNSELING AND SERVICES.—Subsection (e) of such section is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking ''to veterans'';

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking ''women veterans'' and inserting ''individuals''; and

(B) by striking ''training under subsection (d).'' and inserting ''training under subsection (d), disaggregated by—

''(A) veterans;

''(B) members of the Armed Forces (including members of the National Guard and Reserves) on active duty; and

''(C) for each of subparagraphs (A) and (B)—

''(i) men; and

''(ii) women.'';

(3) in paragraph (4), by striking ''veterans'' and inserting ''individuals''; and

(4) in paragraph (5)—

(A) by striking ''women veterans'' and inserting ''individuals'' ; and

(B) by inserting '', including specific recommendations for individuals specified in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of paragraph (2)'' before the period at the end.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 363. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SCREENING MECHANISM TO DETECT INCIDENTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and implement a screening mechanism to be used when a veteran seeks healthcare services from the Department of Veterans Affairs to detect if the veteran has been a victim of domestic abuse for purposes of improving the treatment of the veteran and assessing the prevalence of domestic abuse in the veteran population.

(b) READILY AVAILABLE SCREENING TOOLS.—In developing and implementing a screening mechanism under subsection (a), the Secretary may incorporate into the screening mechanism such readily available screening tools as the Secretary considers appropriate for the screening mechanism.

(c) DOMESTIC ABUSE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''domestic abuse'' means behavior with respect to an individual that—

(1) constitutes—

(A) a pattern of behavior resulting in physical or emotional abuse, economic control, or interference with the personal liberty of that individual;

(B) a violation of Federal or State law involving the use, attempted use, or threatened use of force or violence against that individual; or

(C) a violation of a lawful order issued for the protection of that individual; and

(2) is committed by a person who—

(A) is a current or former spouse or domestic partner of that individual;

(B) shares a child in common with that individual;

(C) is a current or former intimate partner of that individual that shares or has shared a common domicile with that individual;

(D) is a caregiver or family caregiver of that individual (as such terms are defined in

section 1720G(d) of title 38, United States Code); or

(E) is in any other type of relationship with that individual that the Secretary may specify for purposes of this section.

SEC. 364. REPORTS ON MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA AND DOMESTIC ABUSE.

(a) REPORT ON SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Not later than 630 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the treatment and services available from the Department of Veterans Affairs for male veterans who experience military sexual trauma compared to such treatment and services available to female veterans who experience military sexual trauma.

(b) REPORT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE AMONG VETERANS.—Not later than two years after the implementation of the screening mechanism required by section 363(a) of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shall jointly submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on domestic abuse among veterans that includes the following:

(1) A summary of the types, outcomes, and circumstances of incidents of domestic abuse that have been reported by veterans during the two-year period preceding the submission of the report.

(2) A summary of the treatments available from the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans who experience domestic abuse and an assessment of the effectiveness of those treatments.

(3) Data and analysis on any correlation between an incident of military sexual trauma or sexual trauma experienced after the age of 18 and domestic abuse.

(4) Any other issues that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determines appropriate.

(c) REPORTS ON TRANSITION OF MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA AND DOMESTIC ABUSE TREATMENT FROM DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Not later than 630 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for five years, the Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Joint Executive Committee established by section 320(a) of title 38, United States Code, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on military sexual trauma and domestic abuse that includes the following:

(1) The processes and procedures utilized by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to facilitate transition of treatment of individuals who have experienced military sexual trauma or domestic abuse from treatment provided by the Department of Defense to treatment provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) A description and assessment of the collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense in assisting veterans in filing claims for disabilities related to military sexual trauma or domestic abuse, including permitting veterans access to information and evidence necessary to develop or support such claims.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—The term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

(2) DOMESTIC ABUSE.—The term ''domestic abuse'' has the meaning given that term in section 363(c) of this Act.

(3) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' means psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a mental health professional employed by the Department, resulted from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training.

(4) SEXUAL HARASSMENT.—The term ''sexual harassment'' means repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character.

(5) SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning given that term by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for purposes of this section.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle G—Reproductive Treatment and Services

SEC. 371. CLARIFICATION THAT FERTILITY COUNSELING AND TREATMENT ARE MEDICAL SERVICES WHICH THE SECRETARY MAY FURNISH TO VETERANS LIKE OTHER MEDICAL SERVICES.

Section 1701(6), as amended by section 305(b)(1) of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(I) Fertility counseling and treatment, including treatment using assisted reproductive technology.''.

SEC. 372. REPRODUCTIVE TREATMENT AND CARE FOR SPOUSES AND SURROGATES OF VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter VIII of chapter 17 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1788. Reproductive treatment and care for spouses and surrogates of veterans

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall furnish fertility counseling and treatment, including through the use of assisted reproductive technology, to a spouse or surrogate of a severely wounded, ill, or injured veteran who has an infertility condition incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service and who is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established under section 1705(a) of this title if the spouse or surrogate and the veteran apply jointly for such counseling and treatment through a process prescribed by the Secretary.

''(b) COORDINATION OF CARE FOR OTHER SPOUSES AND SURROGATES.—In the case of a spouse or surrogate of a veteran not described in subsection (a) who is seeking fertility counseling and treatment, the Secretary may coordinate fertility counseling and treatment for such spouse or surrogate.

''(c) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to require the Secretary—

''(1) to find or certify a surrogate for a veteran or to connect a surrogate with a veteran; or

''(2) to furnish maternity care to a spouse or surrogate of a veteran.

''(d) ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'assisted reproductive technology' includes in vitro fertilization and other fertility treatments in which both eggs and sperm are handled when clinically appropriate.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1787 the following new item:

''1788. Reproductive treatment and care for spouses and surrogates of veterans.''.

SEC. 373. ADOPTION ASSISTANCE FOR SEVERELY WOUNDED VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter VIII of chapter 17, as amended by section 372(a) of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1789. Adoption assistance

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may pay an amount, not to exceed the limitation amount, to assist a covered veteran in the adoption of one or more children.

''(b) COVERED VETERAN.—For purposes of this section, a covered veteran is any severely wounded, ill, or injured veteran who—

''(1) has an infertility condition incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service; and

''(2) is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established under section 1705(a) of this title.

''(c) LIMITATION AMOUNT.—For purposes of this section, the limitation amount is the amount equal to the lesser of—

''(1) the cost the Department would incur if the Secretary were to provide a covered veteran with one cycle of fertility treatment through the use of assisted reproductive technology under section 1788 of this title, as determined by the Secretary; or

''(2) the cost the Department would incur by paying the expenses of three adoptions by covered veterans, as determined by the Secretary.

''(d) ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'assisted reproductive technology' has the meaning given that term in section 1788 of this title.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17, as amended by section 372(b) of this Act, is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1788 the following new item:

''1789. Adoption assistance.''.

SEC. 374. REGULATIONS ON FURNISHING OF FERTILITY COUNSELING AND TREATMENT AND ADOPTION ASSISTANCE BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall prescribe regulations—

(1) on the furnishing of fertility treatment to veterans using assisted reproductive technology;

(2) to carry out section 1788 of title 38, United States Code, as added by section 372 of this Act; and

(3) to carry out section 1789 of such title, as added by section 373 of this Act.

(b) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, during the period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act and ending on the date on which the Secretary prescribes regulations under subsection (a), the Secretary may not furnish—

(1) to a veteran any fertility treatment that uses an assisted reproductive technology that the Secretary has not used in the provision of a fertility treatment to a veteran before the date of the enactment of this Act;

(2) any fertility counseling or treatment under section 1788 of such title, as added by section 372 of this Act; or

(3) any assistance under section 1789 of such title, as added by section 373 of this Act.

(c) ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''assisted reproductive technology'' has the meaning given the term in section 1788 of such title, as added by section 372 of this Act.

SEC. 375. COORDINATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ON FURNISHING OF FERTILITY COUNSELING AND TREATMENT.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense shall share best practices and facilitate referrals, as they consider appropriate, on the furnishing of fertility counseling and treatment.

SEC. 376. FACILITATION OF REPRODUCTION AND INFERTILITY RESEARCH.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 73, as amended by section 325(a) of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 7330C. Facilitation of reproduction and infertility research

''(a) FACILITATION OF RESEARCH REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall facilitate research conducted collaboratively by the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to improve the ability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to meet the long-term reproductive health care needs of veterans who have a genitourinary service-connected disability or a condition that was incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service, such as a spinal cord injury, that affects the veterans' ability to reproduce.

''(b) DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that information produced by the research facilitated under this section that may be useful for other activities of the Veterans Health Administration is disseminated throughout the Veterans Health Administration.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73, as amended by section 325(b) of this Act, is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7330B the following new item:

''7330C. Facilitation of reproduction and infertility research.''.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than three years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the research activities conducted by the Secretary under section 7330C of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

SEC. 377. ANNUAL REPORT ON PROVISION OF FERTILITY COUNSELING AND TREATMENT FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less frequently than annually thereafter, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the fertility counseling and treatment furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs during the year preceding the submittal of the report.

(b) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include, for the period covered by the report, the following:

(1) The number of veterans who received fertility counseling or treatment furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs, disaggregated by era of military service of such veterans.

(2) The number of spouses and surrogates of veterans who received fertility counseling or treatment furnished by the Department.

(3) The cost to the Department of furnishing fertility counseling and treatment, disaggregated by cost of services and administration.

(4) The average cost to the Department per recipient of such counseling and treatment.

(5) In cases in which the Department furnished fertility treatment through the use of assisted reproductive technology, the average number of cycles per person furnished.

(6) A description of how fertility counseling and treatment services of the Department are coordinated with similar services of the Department of Defense.

SEC. 378. PROGRAM ON ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.

(a) ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS RECEIVING HEALTH CARE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 17 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 1709B. Assistance for child care for certain veterans receiving health care

''(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to provide, subject to subsection (b), assistance to qualified veterans described in subsection (c) to obtain child care so that such veterans can receive health care services described in subsection (c).

''(b) LIMITATION ON PERIOD OF PAYMENTS.—Assistance may only be provided to a qualified veteran under this section for receipt of child care during the period that the qualified veteran—

''(1) receives health care services described in subsection (c) at a facility of the Department; and

''(2) requires travel to and from such facility for the receipt of such health care services.

''(c) QUALIFIED VETERANS.—For purposes of this section, a qualified veteran is a veteran who is—

''(1) the primary caretaker of a child or children; and

''(2)(A) receiving from the Department—

''(i) regular mental health care services;

''(ii) intensive mental health care services; or

''(iii) such other intensive health care services that the Secretary determines that provision of assistance to the veteran to obtain child care would improve access to such health care services by the veteran; or

''(B) in need of regular or intensive mental health care services from the Department, and but for lack of child care services, would receive such health care services from the Department.

''(d) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program in no fewer than three Veterans Integrated Service Networks selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

''(e) FORMS OF CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE.—(1) Child care assistance under this section may include the following:

''(A) Stipends for the payment of child care offered by licensed child care centers (either directly or through a voucher program) which shall be, to the extent practicable, modeled after the Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Subsidy Program established pursuant to section 630 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2002 (Public Law 107–67; 115 Stat. 552).

''(B) Direct provision of child care at an on-site facility of the Department.

''(C) Payments to private child care agencies.

''(D) Collaboration with facilities or programs of other Federal departments or agencies.

''(E) Such other forms of assistance as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(2) In the case that child care assistance under this section is provided as a stipend under paragraph (1)(A), such stipend shall cover the full cost of such child care.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1709A the following new item:

''1709B. Assistance for child care for certain veterans receiving health care.''.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 205(e) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1710 note) is amended by inserting ''but not after the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014'' before the period at the end.

(b) ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING READJUSTMENT COUNSELING AND RELATED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 17, as amended by subsection (a)(1) of this section, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"§ 1709C. Assistance for child care for individuals receiving readjustment counseling and related mental health services

''(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to provide, subject to subsection (b), assistance to qualified individuals described in subsection (c) to obtain child care so that such individuals can receive readjustment counseling and related mental health services.

''(b) LIMITATION ON PERIOD OF PAYMENTS.—Assistance may only be provided to a qualified individual under this section for receipt of child care during the period that the qualified individual receives readjustment counseling and related health care services at a Vet Center.

''(c) QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS.—For purposes of this section, a qualified individual is an individual who is—

''(1) the primary caretaker of a child or children; and

''(2)(A) receiving from the Department regular readjustment counseling and related mental health services; or

''(B) in need of readjustment counseling and related mental health services from the Department, and but for lack of child care services, would receive such counseling and services from the Department.

''(d) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program under this section in no fewer than three Readjustment Counseling Service Regions selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

''(e) FORMS OF CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE.—(1) Child care assistance under this section may include the following:

''(A) Stipends for the payment of child care offered by licensed child care centers (either directly or through a voucher program) which shall be, to the extent practicable, modeled after the Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Subsidy Program established pursuant to section 630 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2002 (Public Law 107–67; 115 Stat. 552).

''(B) Payments to private child care agencies.

''(C) Collaboration with facilities or programs of other Federal departments or agencies.

''(D) Such other forms of assistance as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(2) In the case that child care assistance under this subsection is provided as a stipend under paragraph (1)(A), such stipend shall cover the full cost of such child care.

''(f) VET CENTER DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'Vet Center' means a center for readjustment counseling and related mental health services for individuals under section 1712A of this title.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17, as amended by subsection (a)(2) of this section, is further amended by inserting after the

item relating to section 1709B the following new item:

''1709C. Assistance for child care for individuals receiving readjustment counseling and related mental health services.''.

SEC. 379. COUNSELING IN RETREAT SETTINGS FOR WOMEN VETERANS NEWLY SEPARATED FROM SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) COUNSELING IN RETREAT SETTINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1720H. Counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide, through the Readjustment Counseling Service of the Veterans Health Administration, reintegration and readjustment services described in subsection (c) in group retreat settings to women veterans who are recently separated from service in the Armed Forces after a prolonged deployment.

''(b) ELECTION OF VETERAN.—The receipt of services under this section by a woman veteran shall be at the election of the veteran.

''(c) COVERED SERVICES.—The services provided to a woman veteran under this section shall include the following:

''(1) Information on reintegration into the veteran's family, employment, and community.

''(2) Financial counseling.

''(3) Occupational counseling.

''(4) Information and counseling on stress reduction.

''(5) Information and counseling on conflict resolution.

''(6) Such other information and counseling as the Secretary considers appropriate to assist the veteran in reintegration into the veteran's family, employment, and community.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1720G the following new item:

''1720H. Counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces.''.

(b) REPEAL OF SUPERSEDED PILOT PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—Section 203 of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1712A note) is hereby repealed.

Subtitle H—Major Medical Facility Leases

SEC. 381. AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility leases at the locations specified, and in an amount for each lease not to exceed the amount shown for such location (not including any estimated cancellation costs):

(1) For a clinical research and pharmacy coordinating center, Albuquerque, New Mexico, an amount not to exceed $9,560,000.

(2) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Brick, New Jersey, an amount not to exceed $7,280,000.

(3) For a new primary care and dental clinic annex, Charleston, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $7,070,250.

(4) For the Cobb County community-based Outpatient Clinic, Cobb County, Georgia, an amount not to exceed $6,409,000.

(5) For the Leeward Outpatient Healthcare Access Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, including a co-located clinic with the Department of Defense and the co-location of the Honolulu Regional Office of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Kapolei Vet Center of the Department of Veterans Affairs, an amount not to exceed $15,887,370.

(6) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Johnson County, Kansas, an amount not to exceed $2,263,000.

(7) For a replacement community-based outpatient clinic, Lafayette, Louisiana, an amount not to exceed $2,996,000.

(8) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lake Charles, Louisiana, an amount not to exceed $2,626,000.

(9) For outpatient clinic consolidation, New Port Richey, Florida, an amount not to exceed $11,927,000.

(10) For an outpatient clinic, Ponce, Puerto Rico, an amount not to exceed $11,535,000.

(11) For lease consolidation, San Antonio, Texas, an amount not to exceed $19,426,000.

(12) For a community-based outpatient clinic, San Diego, California, an amount not to exceed $11,946,100.

(13) For an outpatient clinic, Tyler, Texas, an amount not to exceed $4,327,000.

(14) For the Errera Community Care Center, West Haven, Connecticut, an amount not to exceed $4,883,000.

(15) For the Worcester community-based Outpatient Clinic, Worcester, Massachusetts, an amount not to exceed $4,855,000.

(16) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, an amount not to exceed $4,232,060.

(17) For a multispecialty clinic, Chattanooga, Tennessee, an amount not to exceed $7,069,000.

(18) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Chico, California, an amount not to exceed $4,534,000.

(19) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Chula Vista, California, an amount not to exceed $3,714,000.

(20) For a new research lease, Hines, Illinois, an amount not to exceed $22,032,000.

(21) For a replacement research lease, Houston, Texas, an amount not to exceed $6,142,000.

(22) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lincoln, Nebraska, an amount not to exceed $7,178,400.

(23) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lubbock, Texas, an amount not to exceed $8,554,000.

(24) For a community-based outpatient clinic consolidation, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $8,022,000.

(25) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Phoenix, Arizona, an amount not to exceed $20,757,000.

(26) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Redding, California, an amount not to exceed $8,154,000.

(27) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Tulsa, Oklahoma, an amount not to exceed $13,269,200.

SEC. 382. BUDGETARY TREATMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITIES LEASES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Title 31, United States Code, requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to record the full cost of its contractual obligation against funds available at the time a contract is executed.

(2) Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11 provides guidance to agencies in meeting the statutory requirements under title 31, United States Code, with respect to leases.

(3) For operating leases, Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11 requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to record upfront budget authority in an ''amount equal to total payments under the full term of the lease or [an] amount sufficient to cover first year lease payments plus cancellation costs''.

(b) REQUIREMENT FOR OBLIGATION OF FULL COST.—Subject to the availability of appropriations provided in advance, in exercising the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into leases provided in this Act, the Secretary shall record, pursuant to section 1501 of title 31, United States Code, as the full cost of the contractual obligation at the time a contract is executed either—

(1) an amount equal to total payments under the full term of the lease; or

(2) if the lease specifies payments to be made in the event the lease is terminated before its full term, an amount sufficient to cover the first year lease payments plus the specified cancellation costs.

(c) TRANSPARENCY.—

(1) COMPLIANCE.—Subsection (b) of section 8104 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(7) In the case of a prospectus proposing funding for a major medical facility lease, a detailed analysis of how the lease is expected to comply with Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11 and section 1341 of title 31 (commonly referred to as the 'Anti-Deficiency Act'). Any such analysis shall include—

''(A) an analysis of the classification of the lease as a 'lease-purchase', 'capital lease', or 'operating lease' as those terms are defined in Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11;

''(B) an analysis of the obligation of budgetary resources associated with the lease; and

''(C) an analysis of the methodology used in determining the asset cost, fair market value, and cancellation costs of the lease.''.

(2) SUBMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—Such section 8104 is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(h)(1) Not less than 30 days before entering into a major medical facility lease, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives—

''(A) notice of the Secretary's intention to enter into the lease;

''(B) a copy of the proposed lease;

''(C) a description and analysis of any differences between the prospectus submitted pursuant to subsection (b) and the proposed lease; and

''(D) a scoring analysis demonstrating that the proposed lease fully complies with Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11.

''(2) Each committee described in paragraph (1) shall ensure that any information submitted to the committee under such paragraph is treated by the committee with the same level of confidentiality as is required by law of the Secretary and subject to the same statutory penalties for unauthorized disclosure or use as the Secretary.

''(3) Not more than 30 days after entering into a major medical facility lease, the Secretary shall submit to each committee described in paragraph (1) a report on any material differences between the lease that was entered into and the proposed lease described under such paragraph, including how the lease that was entered into changes the previously submitted scoring analysis described in subparagraph (D) of such paragraph.''.

(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section, or the amendments made by this section, shall be construed to in any way relieve the Department of Veterans Affairs from any statutory or regulatory obligations or requirements existing prior to the enactment of this section and such amendments.

TITLE IV—EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED MATTERS

SUBTITLE A—TRAINING AND OTHER SERVICES FOR VETERANS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT

SEC. 401. REAUTHORIZATION OF VETERANS RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) EXTENSION.—Subsection (k) of section 211 of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (Public Law 112–56; 38 U.S.C. 4100 note) is amended by striking ''March 31, 2014'' and inserting ''June 30, 2016''.

(b) NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VETERANS.—Subsection (a)(2) of such section is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

''(C) 50,000 during the period beginning April 1, 2014, and ending June 30, 2015; and

''(D) 50,000 during the period beginning July 1, 2015, and ending June 30, 2016.''.

(c) CLARIFICATION OF LIMITATION ON AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended by striking ''up to 12 months of retraining assistance provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs'' and inserting ''an aggregate of not more than 12 months of retraining assistance provided by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs under this section''.

(d) PROVIDERS OF RETRAINING ASSISTANCE.—Subsection (b) of such section is further amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (3), (4), and (5) as paragraphs (4), (5), and (6), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph (3):

''(3) is offered by a four-year educational institution and, as determined by the Secretary, is not reasonably available at a community college or technical school;''.

(e) EXTENSION OF APPLICATION DATE.—Subsection (e)(1)(G) of such section is amended by striking ''October 1, 2013'' and inserting ''October 1, 2015''.

(f) REPORTS.—Subsection (i) of such section is amended—

(1) in the subsection heading, by striking ''REPORT'' and inserting ''REPORTS'';

(2) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraph (1):

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress reports on training assistance provided under this section as follows:

''(A) By not later than October 1, 2015, for participants provided assistance through March 31, 2014.

''(B) By not later than October 1, 2017, for participants provided assistance during the period beginning on April 1, 2014, and ending on June 2016.''; and

(3) in paragraph (2), by striking ''The report required by paragraph (1) shall include'' and inserting ''Each report required by paragraph (1) shall include, for the period covered by such report,''.

SEC. 402. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PROVIDE REHABILITATION AND VOCATIONAL BENEFITS TO MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES WITH SEVERE INJURIES OR ILLNESSES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1631(b)(2) of the Wounded Warrior Act (title XVI of Public Law 110–181; 10 U.S.C. 1071 note) is amended by striking ''December 31, 2014'' and inserting ''December 31, 2016''.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the benefits provided by the Secretary under section 1631(b) of such Act.

(2) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this subsection, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(A) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 403. EXTENSION OF ADDITIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS FOR PERSONS WHO HAVE EXHAUSTED RIGHTS TO UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS UNDER STATE LAW.

Section 3102(b)(4) is amended by striking ''March 31, 2014'' and inserting ''March 31, 2016''.

SEC. 404. UNIFIED EMPLOYMENT PORTAL FOR VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4105 is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(c)(1) The Secretary shall develop a single, unified Federal web-based employment portal, for use by veterans, containing information regarding all Federal programs and activities concerning employment, unemployment, and training to the extent the programs and activities affect veterans.

''(2) The Secretary shall work with representatives from the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Small Business Administration, and other Federal agencies and organizations concerned with veterans' issues, to determine an appropriate platform and implementing agency for the portal. The Secretary shall enter into an agreement with the other Federal agencies for the implementation of the portal.''.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary of Labor shall implement the portal required by subsection (c) of section 4105 of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a) of this section), by not later than January 1, 2015.

SEC. 405. REPORT ON UNIFIED GOVERNMENT INTERNET PORTAL FOR VETERANS ON JOBS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

(a) IDENTIFICATION OF INTERNET WEBSITES AND APPLICATIONS THAT CAN ASSIST VETERANS SEEKING EMPLOYMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Labor shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Secretary of Defense, and other appropriate public and private entities, take appropriate actions to identify Internet websites and applications that can assist veterans in seeking employment.

(2) PRIORITY IN IDENTIFICATION OF CERTAIN WEBSITES AND APPLICATIONS.—In identifying websites and applications pursuant to paragraph (1), the Secretary shall place a particular priority on identifying websites and applications that do the following:

(A) Match veterans seeking employment with available jobs based on the skills the veterans acquired as members of the Armed Forces.

(B) Permit employers to post information about available jobs.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Secretary of Labor shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the actions of the Secretary under subsection (a). The report shall include an assessment of the feasibility and advisability of creating a single, unified Internet-based employment portal for the Federal Government for use by veterans regarding employment through the Federal Government, including the cost of creating the portal, the collaboration with other Federal agencies required to create the portal, and the anticipated use of the portal.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 406. INFORMATION ON DISABILITY-RELATED EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION PROTECTIONS IN TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1144(b) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(9) Provide information about disability-related employment and education protections.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle B—Employment of Veterans and Recognition of Veteran Status With Respect to Employment Related Matters

SEC. 411. EMPLOYMENT OF VETERANS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4214 is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the following:

''(4)(A) The requirement under this paragraph is in addition to the appointment of qualified covered veterans under the authority under paragraph (1) by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

''(B) The head of each agency, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, shall develop a plan for exercising the authority specified in subparagraph (C) during the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014.

''(C) The authority specified in this subparagraph is the authority as follows:

''(i) The authority under paragraph (1).

''(ii) The authority available to the agency concerned under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–339) and the amendments made by that Act.

''(D) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall ensure that under the plans developed under subparagraph (B) agencies shall appoint to existing vacancies not fewer than 15,000 qualified covered veterans during the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014. For purposes of complying with this subparagraph, an appointment pursuant to the authority referred to in subparagraph (C)(ii) shall not count toward the number required by this subparagraph unless the appointment is to a vacancy in a full-time, permanent position.'';

(2) in subsection (d), in the third sentence, by inserting ''(including, during the 5-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, the development and implementation by each agency of the plan required under subsection (b)(4), which shall include information regarding the grade or pay level of appointments by the agency under the plan and whether the appointments are, or are converted to, career or career-conditional appointments)'' after ''subsection (b) of this section''; and

(3) in subsection (e)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in the matter before subparagraph (A), by striking ''to the Congress'' and inserting ''to the appropriate committees of Congress''; and

(ii) in subparagraph (A), by inserting ''(including, during the 5-year period beginning

on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, the development and implementation by the agency of the plan required under subsection (b)(4), which shall include information regarding the grade or pay level of appointments by the agency under the plan and whether the appointments are, or are converted to, permanent appointments)'' before the period; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) In this subsection, the term 'appropriate committees of Congress' means—

''(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate; and

''(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives.''.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress (as defined under section 4214(e)(3) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a)) regarding the development of a plan to carry out the amendments made by subsection (a).

SEC. 412. STATE RECOGNITION OF MILITARY EXPERIENCE OF VETERANS IN ISSUING LICENSES AND CREDENTIALS TO VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4102A(c) is amended by striking paragraph (9) and inserting the following new paragraph (9):

''(9)(A) As a condition of a grant or contract under which funds are made available to a State under subsection (b)(5) in order to carry out section 4103A or 4104 of this title, the State shall—

''(i) establish a program under which the State administers an examination to each veteran seeking a license or credential issued by the State and issues such license or credential to such veteran without requiring such veteran to undergo any training or apprenticeship if the veteran—

''(I) receives a satisfactory score on completion of such examination, as determined by the State;

''(II) has been awarded a military occupational specialty that is substantially equivalent to or exceeds the requirements of the State for the issuance of such license or credential;

''(III) has engaged in the active practice of the occupation for which the veteran is seeking such license or credential for at least two of the five years preceding the date of application; and

''(IV) pays any customary or usual fees required by the State for such license or credential; and

''(ii) submit each year to the Secretary a report on the exams administered under clause (i) during the most recently completed 12-month period that includes, for the period covered by the report the number of veterans who completed an exam administered by the State under clause (i) and a description of the results of such exams, disaggregated by occupational field.

''(B) The Secretary may waive the requirement under subparagraph (A) that a State establish a program described in that subparagraph as a condition of a grant or contract if the State certifies to the Secretary that the State—

''(i) takes into account previous military training for the purposes of issuing licenses or credentials;

''(ii) permits veterans to completely satisfy through examination any training or testing requirements for a license or credential with respect to which a veteran has previously completed military training; and

''(iii) for any credential or license for which a veteran is unable to completely satisfy such requirements through examination, the State substantially reduces training time required to satisfy such requirement based on the military training received by the veteran.

''(C) Not less frequently than once each year, the Secretary shall submit to Congress and the Secretary of Defense a report summarizing the information received by the Secretary under subparagraph (A)(ii).''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) EXAMS.—Subparagraph (A) of section 4102A(c)(9) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to grants and contracts described in such subparagraph awarded after such date.

(2) REPORTS.—Subparagraph (B) of such section 4102A(c)(9), as so added, shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and the Secretary of Labor shall submit the first report under such subparagraph not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 413. GRANTS TO HIRE VETERANS AS FIRST RESPONDERS.

(a) GRANTS FOR FIREFIGHTERS.—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall award grants under section 34 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2229a) to hire veterans as firefighters.

(b) GRANTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS.—The Attorney General shall award grants under part Q of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796dd et seq.) to hire veterans as law enforcement officers.

(c) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this section to hire veterans, the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General shall give priority to the hiring of veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces on or after September 11, 2001.

(d) FUNDING.—

(1) DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY.—There is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Homeland Security, $125,000,000 to carry out subsection (a).

(2) DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.—There is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Justice, $125,000,000 to carry out subsection (b).

(3) AVAILABILITY.—The amounts authorized to be appropriated by this subsection shall be available for expenditure through September 30, 2018.

SEC. 414. EMPLOYMENT OF VETERANS AS EVALUATION FACTOR IN THE AWARDING OF FEDERAL CONTRACTS.

(a) CIVILIAN CONTRACTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 33 of title 41, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3313. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor

''The head of each executive agency shall consider favorably as an evaluation factor in solicitations for contracts and task or delivery order valued at or above $25,000,000 the employment by a prospective contractor of veterans constituting at least 5 percent of the contractor's workforce.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 33 of such title is amended by adding after the item relating to section 3312 the following new item:

''3313. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor.''.

(b) DEFENSE CONTRACTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 137 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 2338. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor

''The head of each agency shall consider favorably as an evaluation factor in solicitations for contracts and task or delivery order valued at or above $25,000,000 the employment by a prospective contractor of veterans constituting at least 5 percent of the contractor's workforce.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 137 of such title is amended by adding after the item relating to section 2337 the following new item:

''2338. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor.''.

(c) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council shall amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation to carry out the provisions of section 3313 of title 41, United States Code, and section 2338 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsections (a) and (b), respectively.

SEC. 415. REPORT ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MEMBERS OF RESERVE COMPONENTS OF ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS IN CIVILIAN LABOR MARKET.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 570 days after the date of the enactment of this act, the Secretary of Labor, in coordination with the heads of such agencies as the Secretary considers appropriate, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on barriers and potential discrimination facing veterans in the labor market.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An evaluation of the following:

(A) The extent to which members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces and veterans face barriers to entry into the civilian labor market, including whether such members and veterans face obstacles in obtaining employment, maintaining employment, or receiving promotions while employed.

(B) The extent to which a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces or a veteran faces discrimination in the civilian labor market based on the member's or veteran's status as a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces or as a veteran, as the case may be.

(C) The adequacy and effectiveness of Federal laws in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act in preventing or ameliorating acts of discrimination against members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces and veterans seeking or retaining employment in the civilian labor market.

(D) The adequacy and effectiveness of programs of the Department of Labor in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act in educating private sector employers on matters relevant to hiring and employing veterans and the military experience of veterans.

(2) Such recommendations as the Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action—

(A) to address barriers or discrimination that members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces and veterans may face in the civilian labor market;

(B) to improve education and outreach for employers in the civilian labor market on issues regarding hiring and employing such members and veterans; and

(C) to assist employers in the civilian labor market in matching the military experience of such members and veterans with the needs of such employers.

(3) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(1) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle C—Program on Career Transition

SEC. 421. PROGRAM ON PROVISION OF CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES TO YOUNG VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in collaboration with the Secretary of Labor, carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of establishing a program to provide career transition services to eligible individuals—

(1) to provide eligible individuals with work experience in the civilian sector;

(2) to increase the marketable skills of eligible individuals;

(3) to assist eligible individuals in obtaining long-term employment; and

(4) to assist in integrating eligible individuals into their local communities.

(b) ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—For purposes of the program, an eligible individual is an individual who—

(1) is—

(A) a veteran of the Armed Forces who was discharged or released from service therein under conditions other than dishonorable; or

(B) a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces (including the National Guard) who—

(i) served on active duty in the Armed Forces (other than active duty for training) for more than 180 consecutive days during the three-year period ending on the date of application for participation in the program; and

(ii) is not serving on active duty on the date of commencement of participation in the program;

(2) if discharged or released from the Armed Forces on the date of commencement of participation in the program, was so discharged or released not later than three years before application for participation in the program;

(3) is unemployed or underemployed, as determined by the Secretary; and

(4) is, at the time at which the individual applies for participation in the program, 18 years of age or older, but not more than 30 years of age.

(c) ELIGIBLE EMPLOYERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of the program, an eligible employer is an employer determined by the Secretary to meet such criteria for participation in the program as the Secretary shall establish for purposes of the program.

(2) PAST PERFORMANCE ON CERTAIN MATTERS.—The criteria established by the Secretary under paragraph (1) may include past performance of an employer with respect to the following:

(A) Job training, basic skills training, and related activities.

(B) Financial accountability.

(C) Demonstrated high potential for growth and long-term job creation.

(3) FOR-PROFIT AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT EMPLOYERS.—The employers determined by the Secretary to be eligible employers under paragraph (1) may include both for-profit and not-for-profit employers.

(4) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS.—In determining employers to be eligible employers under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall ensure that small business concerns are afforded opportunities to participate in the program.

(5) EXCLUSIONS.—The following employers may not be determined to be an eligible employer under paragraph (1):

(A) An agency of the Federal Government or a State or local government.

(B) An employer that has previously participated in the program and, as determined by the Secretary, failed to abide by any requirement of the program.

(C) An employer that cannot give an assurance to the Secretary at the time of application for participation in the program under subsection (l), and in such manner as the Secretary shall specify pursuant to that subsection, on each matter as follows:

(i) That the employer has not been investigated or subject to a case or action by the Federal Trade Commission during the 180-day period ending on the date the employer would otherwise commence participation in the program.

(ii) That the employer has been in good standing with a State business bureau during the period described in clause (i).

(iii) That the employer is not delinquent with respect to payment of any taxes or employer contributions described under section 3301 and 3302 (a)(1) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 3301 and 3302(a)(1)).

(iv) That the employer would not request the placement of an additional eligible individual under the program, if after such additional placement, the number of eligible individuals placed in internships at such employer under the program would constitute more than 10 percent of the eligible employer's workforce. For purposes of the previous sentence, being an intern under the program placed at an employer shall be considered part of the employer's workforce.

(v) That the employer has the intention of retaining eligible participants after such participants have completed participation in the program.

(d) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the program during the three-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(e) CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES.—For purposes of the program, career transition services are the following:

(1) Internships under subsection (f).

(2) Mentorship and job-shadowing under subsection (g).

(3) Volunteer opportunities under subsection (h).

(4) Professional skill workshops under subsection (i).

(5) Skills assessment under subsection (j).

(6) Additional services under subsection (k).

(f) INTERNSHIPS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For each eligible individual whom the Secretary approves for participation in the program, the Secretary shall attempt to place such eligible individual in an internship on a full-time basis with an eligible employer whom the Secretary has approved for participation in the program.

(2) DURATION.—Each internship under the program shall be for a period of one year.

(3) WAGES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall furnish pay and benefits to each eligible individual participating in an internship under the program for the duration of such participation in an aggregate amount not to exceed $25,000.

(4) EMPLOYMENT STATUS.—For purposes of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Public Law 111–148), an eligible individual placed in an internship with an eligible employer under the program shall be considered an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs and not the eligible employer during the period of such internship under the program.

(5) RELATION TO OTHER FEDERAL ASSISTANCE.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, pay received by an individual under this subsection may not be used in any calculation to determine the eligibility of such individual for any Federal program for the purpose of obtaining child care assistance.

(g) MENTORSHIP AND JOB-SHADOWING.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As a condition of an eligible employer's participation in the program and the placement of an eligible individual in an internship at the eligible employer, the eligible employer shall provide each eligible individual placed in an internship at the eligible employer under the program with at least one mentor who is an employee of the eligible employer.

(2) JOB-SHADOWING AND CAREER COUNSELING.—To the extent practicable, a mentor assigned to an eligible individual participating in the program shall provide such eligible individual with job shadowing and career counseling.

(h) VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—As a condition on participation in the program, each eligible individual who participates in the program shall, not less frequently than once each month in which the eligible individual participates in the program, engage in a qualifying volunteer activity in accordance with guidelines the Secretary shall establish.

(2) QUALIFYING VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES.—For purposes of this subsection, a qualifying volunteer activity is any activity the Secretary considers related to providing assistance to, or for the benefit of, a veteran. Such activities may include the following:

(A) Outreach.

(B) Assisting an organization recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code, on a volunteer basis.

(C) Service benefitting a veteran in a State home or a Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility.

(D) Service benefitting a veteran at an institution of higher education.

(i) PROFESSIONAL SKILLS WORKSHOPS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide eligible individuals participating in the program with workshops for the development and improvement of the professional skills of such eligible individuals.

(2) TAILORED.—The workshops provided by the Secretary shall be tailored to meet the particular needs of eligible individuals participating in the program as determined under subsection (j).

(3) TOPICS.—The workshops provided to eligible individuals participating in the program may include workshops for the development of such professional skills as the Secretary considers appropriate, which may include the following:

(A) Written and oral communication skills.

(B) Basic word processing and other computer skills.

(C) Interpersonal skills.

(4) MANNER OF PRESENTATION.—Workshops on particular topics shall be provided through such means as may be appropriate, effective, and approved of by the Secretary for purposes of the program. Such means may include use of electronic communication.

(5) ASSESSMENTS.—The Secretary shall conduct an assessment of a participant in a workshop conducted under this subsection to assess the participant's knowledge acquired as a result of participating in the workshop.

(j) SKILLS ASSESSMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Under the program, the Secretary shall develop and implement an

objective assessment of eligible individuals participating in the program to assist in the placement of such individuals in internships under subsection (f) and to assist in the tailoring of workshops under subsection (i).

(2) ELEMENTS.—The assessment may include an assessment of the skill levels and service needs of each participant, which may include a review of basic professional entry-level skills, prior work experience, employability, and the individual's interests.

(k) ADDITIONAL SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the Secretary shall, under the program, furnish the following services to an eligible individual participating in the program when assessment under subsection (j) indicates such services are appropriate:

(A) Counseling, such as job counseling and career counseling.

(B) Job search assistance.

(C) Follow-up services with participants that are offered unsubsidized employment by the employer with whom they were assigned.

(D) Transportation, as described in paragraph (3).

(2) REFERRALS.—In lieu of furnishing a service to an eligible individual under paragraph (1), the Secretary may refer such eligible individual to another Federal, State, or local government program that provides such service.

(3) TRANSPORTATION.—In accordance with criteria established by the Secretary for purposes of the program, the Secretary may pay an allowance based upon mileage, of any eligible individual placed in an internship under the program not in excess of 75 miles to or from a facility of the eligible employer or other place in connection with such internship.

(l) PARTICIPATION.—

(1) APPLICATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—An eligible employer or eligible individual seeking to participate in the program shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary shall specify.

(B) REQUIREMENTS FOR ELIGIBLE EMPLOYERS.—An application submitted by an eligible employer under subparagraph (A) shall include a certification or other information, in such form and manner as the Secretary shall specify, on each of the assurances required by subsection (c)(5)(C), including the assurance that the employer has the intention of retaining eligible participants after they have completed participation in the program as provided in clause (v) of that subsection.

(2) TIME OF APPLICATION FOR CERTAIN ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS.—A member of the Armed Forces on active duty who expects to be an eligible individual described in subsection (b)(1)(A) upon discharge or release from the Armed Forces may submit an application to participate in the program not earlier than 180 days before the date on which the member expects to be discharged or released from the Armed Forces. A member who submits such an application shall be treated as unemployed or underemployed for purposes of subsection (b)(2) if the member has not accepted an offer of employment after discharge or release as of the time of the submittal of the application.

(3) DELIMITING DATE FOR COMMENCEMENT OF PARTICIPATION BY INDIVIDUALS.—An eligible individual may not commence participation in the program after the date that is two years after the date of the commencement of the program.

(4) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall review each application submitted by an applicant under paragraph (1) and approve or disapprove the applicant for participation in the program.

(m) GRANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may award grants to eligible entities to assist the Secretary in carrying out the program.

(2) ELIGIBLE ENTITIES.—For purposes of the program, an eligible entity is a nonprofit organization.

(3) CONSIDERATIONS.—In awarding grants under this subsection, the Secretary may consider whether an eligible entity—

(A) has an understanding of the unemployment problems of eligible individuals and members of the Armed Forces transitioning from service in the Armed Forces to civilian life; and

(B) has the capability to assist the Secretary in administering effectively the program and providing career transition services to eligible individuals.

(4) USE OF FUNDS.—Amounts received by a recipient of a grant under this subsection may be used as the Secretary considers appropriate for purposes of the program, including as follows:

(A) To assist the Secretary in carrying out the program.

(B) To recruit eligible employers and eligible individuals to participate in the program.

(C) To match eligible individuals participating in the program with internship opportunities at eligible employers participating in the program.

(D) To coordinate and carry out job placement and other employer outreach activities.

(n) OUTREACH.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Labor shall jointly carry out a program of outreach to inform eligible employers and eligible individuals about the program and the benefits of participating in the program.

(2) INCLUDED LOCATIONS AND GROUPS.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Labor shall ensure that any outreach program and activities conducted under paragraph (1) include, to the extent practicable, rural communities, tribal lands of the United States, Native Americans, and tribal organizations (as defined in section 3765 of title 38, United States Code).

(o) AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each year of the program, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may recognize one or more eligible employers or one or more eligible individuals participating in the program for demonstrating outstanding achievement in carrying out or in contributing to the success of the program.

(2) CRITERIA.—The Secretary shall establish such selection procedures and criteria as the Secretary considers appropriate for the award of recognition under this subsection.

(p) MINIMIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN ON PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS.—The Secretary shall take such measures as may be necessary to minimize administrative burdens incurred by eligible employers due to participation in the program.

(q) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 45 days after the completion of the first year of the program and not later than 180 days after the completion of the second and third years of the program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the program.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) An evaluation of the program.

(B) The number and characteristics of participants in the program.

(C) The number and types of internships in which eligible individuals were placed under the program.

(D) The number of individuals who obtained long-term full-time unsubsidized employment positions after participation in the program, the hourly wage and nature of such employment, and if available, whether such individuals were still employed in such positions three months after obtaining such positions.

(E) An assessment of the feasibility and advisability of providing career transition services to eligible individuals.

(F) An assessment of the effect of the program on earnings of eligible individuals and the employment of eligible individuals.

(G) Such recommendations for legislative and administrative action as the Secretary may have to improve the program, to expand the program, or to improve the employment of eligible individuals.

(r) FUNDING LIMITATIONS.—

(1) WAGES FOR INTERNSHIPS.—Not less than 95 percent of amounts authorized to be appropriated for the program by subsection (t) shall be used to provide pay under subsection (f)(3).

(2) ADMINISTRATION.—Not more than 5 percent of amounts authorized to be appropriated for the program by subsection (t) may be used to administer the program.

(s) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ACTIVE DUTY, ARMED FORCES, RESERVE COMPONENT, AND VETERAN.—The terms ''active duty'', ''Armed Forces'', ''reserve component'', and ''veteran'' have the meanings given such terms in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) FULL-TIME BASIS.—The term ''full-time basis'', with respect to an internship, means participation in the internship of not fewer than 30 hours per week and not more than 40 hours per week.

(3) SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN.—The term ''small business concern'' has the meaning given that term under section 3(a) of the Small Business Act (15 U.S.C. 632(a)).

(4) UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.—The term ''unemployment compensation'' means regular compensation (as defined in section 205 of the Federal-State Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 1970), compensation under the Federal-State Extended Compensation Act of 1970, and compensation under the emergency unemployment compensation program under title IV of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008.

(t) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, $600,000,000 to carry out this section. The amount so authorized to be appropriated shall remain available until expended.

Subtitle D—Improving Employment and Reemployment Rights of Members of the Uniformed Services

SEC. 431. ENFORCEMENT OF RIGHTS OF MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES WITH RESPECT TO STATES AND PRIVATE EMPLOYERS.

(a) ACTION FOR RELIEF.—Subsection (a) of section 4323 is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking ''appear on behalf of, and act as attorney for, the person on whose behalf the complaint is submitted and'';

(B) by striking ''for such person'';

(C) by striking the fourth sentence; and

(D) by adding at the end the following: ''The person on whose behalf the complaint is referred may, upon timely application, intervene in such action, and may obtain such appropriate relief as is provided in subsections (d) and (e).'';

(2) by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following new paragraph (2):

''(2)(A) Not later than 60 days after the date the Attorney General receives a referral

under paragraph (1), the Attorney General shall transmit, in writing, to the person on whose behalf the complaint is submitted—

''(i) if the Attorney General has made a decision to commence an action for relief under paragraph (1) relating to the complaint of the person, notice of the decision; and

''(ii) if the Attorney General has not made such a decision, notice of when the Attorney General expects to make such a decision.

''(B) If the Attorney General notifies a person that the Attorney General expects to make a decision under subparagraph (A)(ii), the Attorney General shall, not later than 30 days after the date on which the Attorney General makes such decision, notify, in writing, the person of such decision.'';

(3) by redesignating paragraph (3) as paragraph (4);

(4) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph (3):

''(3) Whenever the Attorney General has reasonable cause to believe that a State (as an employer) or a private employer is engaged in a pattern or practice of resistance to the full enjoyment of any of the rights and benefits provided for under this chapter, and that the pattern or practice is of such a nature and is intended to deny the full exercise of such rights and benefits, the Attorney General may commence an action for relief under this chapter.''; and

(5) in paragraph (4), as redesignated by paragraph (3), by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following new subparagraph (C):

''(C) has been notified by the Attorney General that the Attorney General does not intend to commence an action for relief under paragraph (1) with respect to the complaint under such paragraph.''.

(b) STANDING.—Subsection (f) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(f) STANDING.—An action under this chapter may be initiated only by the Attorney General or by a person claiming rights or benefits under this chapter under subsection (a).''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Subsection (h)(2) of such section is amended by striking ''under subsection (a)(2)'' and inserting ''under paragraph (1) or (4) of subsection (a)''.

SEC. 432. SUSPENSION, TERMINATION, OR DEBARMENT OF CONTRACTORS FOR REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OR REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 43 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 4328. Suspension, termination, or debarment of contractors

''(a) GROUNDS FOR SUSPENSION, TERMINATION, OR DEBARMENT.—Payment under a contract awarded by a Federal executive agency may be suspended and the contract may be terminated, and the contractor who made the contract with the agency may be suspended or debarred in accordance with the requirements of this section, if the head of the agency determines that the contractor as an employer has repeatedly been convicted of failing or refusing to comply with one or more provisions of this chapter.

''(b) EFFECT OF DEBARMENT.—A contractor debarred by a final decision under this section is ineligible for award of a contract by a Federal executive agency, and for participation in a future procurement by a Federal executive agency, for a period specified in the decision, not to exceed 5 years.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 43 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 4327 the following new item:

''4328. Suspension, termination, or debarment of contractor.''.

(c) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council shall amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation to carry out section 4328 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 4328 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to failures and refusals to comply with provisions of chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code, occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) ANNUAL REPORT.—Section 4332(a) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (10) as paragraph (11); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (9) the following new paragraph (10):

''(10) The number of suspensions, terminations, and debarments under section 4328 of this title, disaggregated by the agency or department imposing the suspension or debarment.''.

SEC. 433. SUBPOENA POWER FOR SPECIAL COUNSEL IN ENFORCEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES WITH RESPECT TO FEDERAL EXECUTIVE AGENCIES.

Section 4324 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e)(1) In order to carry out the Special Counsel's responsibilities under this section, the Special Counsel may require by subpoena the attendance and testimony of Federal employees and the production of documents from Federal employees and Federal executive agencies.

''(2) In the case of contumacy or failure to obey a subpoena issued under paragraph (1), upon application by the Special Counsel, the Merit Systems Protection Board may issue an order requiring a Federal employee or Federal executive agency to comply with a subpoena of the Special Counsel.

''(3) An order issued under paragraph (2) may be enforced by the Merit Systems Protection Board in the same manner as any order issued under section 1204 of title 5.''.

SEC. 434. ISSUANCE AND SERVICE OF CIVIL INVESTIGATIVE DEMANDS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4323 is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (i) as subsection (j); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (h) the following new subsection (i):

''(i) ISSUANCE AND SERVICE OF CIVIL INVESTIGATIVE DEMANDS.—(1) Whenever the Attorney General has reason to believe that any person may be in possession, custody, or control of any documentary material relevant to an investigation under this subchapter, the Attorney General may, before commencing a civil action under subsection (a), issue in writing and serve upon such person, a civil investigative demand requiring—

''(A) the production of such documentary material for inspection and copying;

''(B) that the custodian of such documentary material answer in writing written questions with respect to such documentary material; or

''(C) the production of any combination of such documentary material or answers.

''(2) The provisions of section 3733 of title 31 governing the authority to issue, use, and enforce civil investigative demands shall apply with respect to the authority to issue, use, and enforce civil investigative demands under this section, except that, for purposes of applying such section 3733—

''(A) references to false claims law investigators or investigations shall be considered references to investigators or investigations under this subchapter;

''(B) references to interrogatories shall be considered references to written questions, and answers to such need not be under oath;

''(C) the definitions relating to 'false claims law' shall not apply; and

''(D) provisions relating to qui tam relators shall not apply.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (i) of section 4323 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(2), shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to violations of chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code, alleged to have occurred on or after such date.

(c) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Section 4332(b)(2) is amended—

(1) by striking ''Not later than'' and inserting the following:

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(B) ANNUAL SUPPLEMENT ON CIVIL INVESTIGATIVE DEMANDS.—

''(i) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General shall include with each report submitted under subparagraph (A) for the last quarter of each fiscal year a report on the issuance of civil investigative demands under section 4323(i) of this title during the most recently completed fiscal year.

''(ii) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under clause (i) shall include the following for the fiscal year covered by the report:

''(I) The number of times that a civil investigative demand was issued under section 4323(i) of this title.

''(II) For each civil investigative demand issued under such section with respect to an investigation, whether such investigation resulted in a settlement, order, or judgment.''.

Subtitle E—Small Business Matters

SEC. 441. EXPANSION OF CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INCLUDE CONDITIONALLY OWNED SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS 100 PERCENT OWNED BY VETERANS.

Section 8127(l) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''unconditionally'' before ''owned by'' each place it appears; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) The term 'unconditionally owned' includes, with respect to ownership of a small business concern, conditional ownership of such small business concern if such business concern is 100 percent owned by one or more veterans.''.

SEC. 442. MODIFICATION OF TREATMENT UNDER CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES OWNED BY VETERANS OF SMALL BUSINESSES AFTER DEATH OF DISABLED VETERAN OWNERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8127(h) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by striking ''rated as'' and all that follows through ''disability.'' and inserting a period; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by amending subparagraph (C) to read as follows:

''(C) The date that—

''(i) in the case of a surviving spouse of a veteran with a service-connected disability rated as 100 percent disabling or who dies as a result of a service-connected disability, is 10 years after the date of the veteran's death; or

''(ii) in the case of a surviving spouse of a veteran with a service-connected disability rated as less than 100 percent disabling who does not die as a result of a service-connected disability, is three years after the date of the veteran's death.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to applications received pursuant to section 8127(f)(2) of title 38, United States Code, that are verified on or after such date.

SEC. 443. TREATMENT OF BUSINESSES AFTER DEATHS OF SERVICEMEMBER-OWNERS FOR PURPOSES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8127 is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (i) through (l) as subsections (j) through (m), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (h) the following new subsection (i):

''(i) TREATMENT OF BUSINESSES AFTER DEATH OF SERVICEMEMBER-OWNER.—(1) If a member of the Armed Forces owns at least 51 percent of a small business concern and such member is killed in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service, the surviving spouse or dependent child of such member who acquires such ownership rights in such small business concern shall, for the period described in paragraph (2), be treated as if the surviving spouse or dependent child were a veteran with a service-connected disability for purposes of determining the status of the small business concern as a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans for purposes of contracting goals and preferences under this section.

''(2) The period referred to in paragraph (1) is the period beginning on the date on which the member of the Armed Forces dies and ending on the date as follows:

''(A) In the case of a surviving spouse, the earliest of the following dates:

''(i) The date on which the surviving spouse remarries.

''(ii) The date on which the surviving spouse relinquishes an ownership interest in the small business concern and no longer owns at least 51 percent of such small business concern.

''(iii) The date that is ten years after the date of the member's death.

''(B) In the case of a dependent child, the earliest of the following dates:

''(i) The date on which the surviving dependent child relinquishes an ownership interest in the small business concern and no longer owns at least 51 percent of such small business concern.

''(ii) The date that is ten years after the date of the member's death.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (i) of section 8127 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to the deaths of members of the Armed Forces occurring on or after such date.

SEC. 444. SPECIAL RULE FOR TREATMENT UNDER CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS LICENSED IN COMMUNITY PROPERTY STATES.

Section 8127, as amended by section 443 of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(n) SPECIAL RULE FOR COMMUNITY PROPERTY STATES.—Whenever the Secretary assesses, for purposes of this section, the degree of ownership by an individual of a small business concern licensed in a community property State, the Secretary shall also assess what that degree of ownership would be if such small business concern had been licensed in a State other than a community property State. If the Secretary determines that such individual would have had a greater degree of ownership of the small business concern had such small business concern been licensed in a State other than a community property State, the Secretary shall treat, for purposes of this section, such small business concern as if it had been licensed in a State other than a community property State.''.

SEC. 445. REPORT ON ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS IN OBTAINING TRAINING ON PURCHASING AND OPERATING A FRANCHISE.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Secretary of Labor shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and other appropriate entities, submit to Congress a report on the assistance available to veterans to obtain training necessary to purchase and operate a franchise.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A description of the assistance available for veterans through the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Small Business Administration, or any other agency of the Federal Government in order to obtain training necessary to purchase or operate a franchise.

(2) Information on the number of veterans who have sought and obtained the training described in paragraph (1) during the five calendar years preceding the report.

(3) A description of any barriers encountered by veterans in obtaining the training described in paragraph (1).

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE V—ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS

SEC. 501. ADMINISTRATION OF VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.

(a) VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 73 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7310. Veterans Integrated Service Networks

''(a) ORGANIZATION.—(1) The Secretary shall organize the Veterans Health Administration in geographically defined Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

''(2) Each Veterans Integrated Service Network shall be organized in consideration of the following:

''(A) The size of the veteran population of the region of the network.

''(B) The complexity of the medical needs of the veterans in such region.

''(C) Patient referral patterns.

''(D) The availability of a full continuum of health care services.

''(E) The ability of the Department to furnish health care efficiently.

''(F) Partnerships with non-Department health care entities.

''(b) STAFFING MODEL.—(1) The Secretary shall establish a staffing model for each Veterans Integrated Service Network that—

''(A) is appropriate for the mission and responsibilities of the Veterans Integrated Service Network; and

''(B) accounts for the specific health care needs of differing populations in the Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(2) The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network complies with the staffing model established by the Secretary under paragraph (1) for such Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(c) INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.—The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network maintains a regional integrated healthcare system by—

''(1) implementing alliances with such other governmental, public, and private health care organizations and practitioners as the Secretary considers appropriate to meet the needs of veterans in the Network;

''(2) providing oversight and management of, and taking responsibility for, a regional budget for the activities of the Veterans Health Administration in the geographic area of the Network that is—

''(A) aligned with the budget guidelines of the Department and the Veterans Health Administration;

''(B) balanced at the end of each fiscal year; and

''(C) sufficient to provide high-quality health care to veterans within the region and to meet any unique needs of the veterans of the region;

''(3) using national metrics to develop systems to provide effective, efficient, and safe delivery of health care; and

''(4) ensuring high-quality clinical programs and services are rendered in and through—

''(A) the medical centers and outpatient clinics of the Department that are located in the Network; and

''(B) other non-Department clinical or health care delivery settings located in the Network.

''(d) REDUCTION IN DUPLICATE FUNCTIONS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Veterans Integrated Service Networks identify and reduce, whenever practicable, the duplication of functions in clinical, administrative, and operational processes and practices of the Veterans Health Administration.

''(e) COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network—

''(1) works to achieve maximum effectiveness in patient care and safety, graduate medical education, and research; and

''(2) assesses the consolidation or realignment of institutional functions, including capital asset, safety, and operational support functions, in collaboration and cooperation with other Veterans Integrated Service Networks and the following offices or entities within the geographical area of the Network:

''(A) The offices of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration.

''(B) The offices, installations, and facilities of the Department of Defense, including the offices, installations, and facilities of each branch of the Armed Forces and the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

''(C) The offices, installations, and facilities of the Coast Guard.

''(D) Offices of State and local agencies that have a mission to provide assistance to veterans.

''(E) Medical schools and other affiliates.

''(F) Offices of Congress, offices of State and local elected officials, and other government offices.

''(G) Federal, State, and local emergency preparedness organizations.

''(H) Community and nonprofit organizations.

''(I) Such other entities of the Federal Government as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(f) HEADQUARTERS.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network has only one headquarters office.

''(2) The location of a headquarters office for a Veterans Integrated Service Network shall be determined by the Secretary and co-located with a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.

''(3)(A) The Secretary may employ or contract for the services of such full time equivalent employees and contractors at the headquarters of each Veterans Integrated Service

Network as the Secretary considers appropriate in accordance with the staffing models established under subsection (b).

''(B) Not later than December 31 each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on employment at the headquarters of Veterans Integrated Service Networks during the most recently completed fiscal year.

''(C) Each report submitted under subparagraph (B) shall include the following for the year covered by the report:

''(i) The number of individuals employed at each headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(ii) The number of individuals employed by the Veterans Health Administration in each Veterans Integrated Service Network who are not employed at the same location as the headquarters of the Network.

''(iii) The title for each position of employment at a headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(iv) The title for each position of employment with the Veterans Health Administration in each Veterans Integrated Service Network that is not at the same location as the headquarters of the Network.

''(v) An assessment of the impact on the budget of the Department by the employment of individuals at the headquarters of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

''(g) TRIENNIAL STRUCTURE REVIEW, REASSESSMENT, AND REPORT.—(1) Beginning three years after the date of the enactment of this section and not less frequently than once every three years thereafter, the Secretary shall conduct a review and assessment of the structure and operations of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks in order to identify recommendations—

''(A) for streamlining and reducing costs associated with the operation of each headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service Network; and

''(B) for reducing costs of health care within the Veterans Health Administration.

''(2) Not later than 180 days after conducting a review and assessment under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee of Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on such review and assessment, which shall include such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate to improve the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7309 the following new item:

''7310. Veterans Integrated Service Networks.''.

(b) RELOCATION OF HEADQUARTERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a headquarters office of a Veterans Integrated Service Network that on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act was in a location that was not co-located with a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center and the Secretary is engaged in a lease for such location, the Secretary may—

(A) relocate such headquarters upon the expiration of such lease so that such headquarters is co-located as required by section 7310(f)(2) of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)(1)); or

(B) notwithstanding such section 7310(f)(2) (as so added), renew such lease or enter into a new lease to keep such headquarters in such location.

(2) REPORT.—If the Secretary renews a lease or engages in a new lease under paragraph (1)(B), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, before renewing such lease or engaging in such lease, a report describing the reasons for such renewal or engagement. Such report shall include the following:

(A) A list of Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers in the Veterans Integrated Service Network of the headquarters with underutilized buildings, the number of such buildings, and the total underutilized square footage for each such medical center.

(B) The cost of the current lease (the annual amount of rent, the total cost over the life of the lease, and the total cost per square foot) and the current square footage being leased.

(C) The cost of the new lease (the annual amount of rent, the total cost over the life of the lease, and the total cost per square foot) and the square footage to be leased.

(c) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to require any change in the location or type of medical care or service provided by a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, a Department community based outpatient clinic, a center for readjustment counseling and related mental health services for veterans under section 1712A of title 38, United States Code (known as a ''vet center''), or other facility that provides direct care or services under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section, and the amendments made by this section, shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 502. REGIONAL SUPPORT CENTERS FOR VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 73, as amended by section 501(a)(1) of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7310A. Regional support centers for Veterans Integrated Service Networks

''(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish not more than four regional support centers within the Veterans Health Administration to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks. The head of each regional support center shall report to the Under Secretary of Health.

''(b) FUNCTIONS.—The functions of the regional support centers established under subsection (a) are as follows:

''(1) To assess the quality of work performed within finance operations and other compliance related activities of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

''(2) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts outreach to veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, or any other contingency operation (as that term is defined in section 101 of title 10).

''(3) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts programs for the benefit of women veterans.

''(4) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts programs that address homelessness among veterans.

''(5) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network consumes energy.

''(6) To assess such other matters concerning the operations and activities of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(c) STAFF.—The Secretary may hire such employees and contractors as the Secretary considers appropriate to carry out the functions of the regional support centers.

''(d) LOCATION OF REGIONAL SUPPORT CENTERS.—(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the location of each regional support center established under subsection (a) shall be determined by the Secretary and co-located with a medical center of the Department.

''(2) The Secretary may choose a location for a regional support center established under subsection (a) that is not co-located with a medical center of the Department if the Secretary submits to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, before entering into a contract for a location that is not co-located with a medical center, a report describing the reasons for choosing a location for the regional support center that is not co-located with a medical center of the Department. Such report shall include the following:

''(A) A list of medical centers of the Department in the Veterans Integrated Service Network of the regional support center with underutilized buildings, the number of all Veterans Health Administration buildings in such Network, and the total underutilized square footage for each medical center of the Department in such Network.

''(B) The estimated cost of such lease (the annual amount of rent, the total cost over the life of the lease, and the total cost per square foot) and the square footage to be leased.''.

(b) INITIAL STAFFING.—In providing for the initial staff of each regional support center established under section 7310A(a) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, to the degree practicable, transfer employees from headquarters of Veterans Integrated Service Networks to regional support centers who were employed in positions at such headquarters that covered functions similar to those described in section 7310A(b) of such title, as so added.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73, as amended by section 501(a)(2) of this Act, is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7310 the following new item:

''7310A. Regional support centers for Veterans Integrated Service Networks.''.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to require any change in the location or type of medical care or service provided by a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, a Department community based outpatient clinic, a center for readjustment counseling and related mental health services for veterans under section 1712A of title 38, United States Code (known as a ''vet center''), or other facility that provides direct care or services under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section, and the amendments made by this section, shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 503. COMMISSION ON CAPITAL PLANNING FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Commission on Capital Planning for Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facilities (in this section referred to as the ''Commission'').

(2) MEMBERSHIP.—

(A) VOTING MEMBERS.—The Commission shall, subject to subparagraph (B), be composed of 10 voting members as follows:

(i) 1 shall be appointed by the President.

(ii) 1 shall be appointed by the Administrator of General Services.

(iii) 3 shall be appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, of whom—

(I) 1 shall be an employee of the Veterans Health Administration;

(II) 1 shall be an employee of the Office of Asset Enterprise Management of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(III) 1 shall be an employee of the Office of Construction and Facilities Management of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(iv) 1 shall be appointed by the Secretary of Defense from among employees of the Army Corps of Engineers.

(v) 1 shall be appointed by the majority leader of the Senate.

(vi) 1 shall be appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

(vii) 1 shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(viii) 1 shall be appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives.

(B) REQUIREMENT RELATING TO CERTAIN APPOINTMENTS OF VOTING MEMBERS.—Of the members appointed pursuant to clause (i), (ii), and (iv) through (viii) of subparagraph (A), all shall have expertise in capital leasing, construction, or health facility management planning.

(C) NON-VOTING MEMBERS.—The Commission shall be assisted by 10 non-voting members, appointed by the vote of a majority of members of the Commission under subparagraph (A), of whom—

(i) 6 shall be representatives of veterans service organizations recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

(ii) 4 shall be individuals from outside the Department of Veterans Affairs with experience and expertise in matters relating to management, construction, and leasing of capital assets.

(D) DATE OF APPOINTMENT OF VOTING MEMBERS.—The appointments of the members of the Commission under subparagraph (A) shall be made not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(3) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—Members shall be appointed for the life of the Commission. Any vacancy in the Commission shall not affect its powers, but shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(4) INITIAL MEETING.—Not later than 15 days after the date on which 7 members of the Commission have been appointed, the Commission shall hold its first meeting.

(5) MEETINGS.—The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chair.

(6) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number of members may hold hearings.

(7) CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR.—The Commission shall select a Chair and Vice Chair from among its members.

(b) DUTIES OF COMMISSION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall undertake a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of various options for capital planning for Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, including an evaluation and assessment of the mechanisms by which the Department currently selects means for the delivery of health care, whether by major construction, major medical facility leases, sharing agreements with the Department of Defense, the Indian Health Service, and Federally Qualified Health Clinics under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b), contract care, multisite care, telemedicine, extended hours for care, or other means.

(2) CONTEXT OF EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT.—In undertaking the evaluation and assessment, the Commission shall consider—

(A) the importance of access to health care through the Department, including associated guidelines of the Department on access to, and drive time for, health care;

(B) limitations and requirements applicable to the construction and leasing of medical facilities for the Department, including applicable laws, regulations, and costs as determined by both the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget;

(C) the nature of capital planning for Department medical facilities in an era of fiscal uncertainty;

(D) projected future fluctuations in the population of veterans; and

(E) the extent to which the Department was able to meet the mandates of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Commission.

(3) PARTICULAR CONSIDERATIONS.—In undertaking the evaluation and assessment, the Commission shall address, in particular, the following:

(A) The Major Medical Facility Lease Program of the Department, including an identification of potential improvements to the lease authorization processes under that Program.

(B) The management processes of the Department for its Major Medical Facility Construction Program, including processes relating to contract award and management, project management, and processing of change orders.

(C) The overall capital planning program of the Department for medical facilities, including an evaluation and assessment of—

(i) the manner in which the Department determines whether to use capital or non-capital means to expand access to health care;

(ii) the manner in which the Department determines the disposition of under-utilized and un-utilized buildings on campuses of Department medical centers, and any barriers to disposition;

(iii) the effectiveness of the facility master planning initiative of the Department; and

(iv) the extent to which sustainable attributes are planned for to decrease operating costs for Department medical facilities.

(D) The current backlog of construction projects for Department medical facilities, including an identification of the most effective means to quickly secure the most critical repairs required, including repairs relating to facility condition deficiencies, structural safety, and compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990.

(4) REPORTS.—Subject to paragraph (5), the Commission shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and to the Committee Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, reports as follows:

(A) Not later than six months after its initial meeting under subsection (a)(4), a report on the Major Medical Facility Lease Program and the Congressional lease authorization process.

(B) Not later than one year after its initial meeting, a report—

(i) on the management processes of the Department for the construction of Department medical facilities; and

(ii) setting forth an update of any matters covered in the report under subparagraph (A).

(C) Not later than 18 months after its initial meeting, a report—

(i) on the overall capital planning program of the Department for medical facilities; and

(ii) setting forth an update of any matters covered in earlier reports under this paragraph.

(D) Not later than two years after its initial meeting, a report—

(i) on the current backlog of construction projects for Department medical facilities;

(ii) setting forth an update of any matters covered in earlier reports under this paragraph; and

(iii) including such other matters relating to the duties of the Commission that the Commission considers appropriate.

(E) Not later than 27 months after its initial meeting, a report on the implementation by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs pursuant to subsection (g) of the recommendations included pursuant to paragraph (5) in the reports under this paragraph.

(5) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Each report under paragraph (4) shall include, for the aspect of the capital asset planning process of the Department covered by such report, such recommendations as the Commission considers appropriate for the improvement and enhancement of such aspect of the capital asset planning process.

(c) POWERS OF COMMISSION.—

(1) HEARINGS.—The Commission may hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission considers advisable to carry out this section.

(2) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The Commission may secure directly from any Federal department or agency such information as the Commission considers necessary to carry out this section. Upon request of the Chair of the Commission, the head of such department or agency shall furnish such information to the Commission.

(d) COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.—

(1) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—Each member of the Commission who is not an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (including travel time) during which such member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission. All members of the Commission who are officers or employees of the United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for their services as officers or employees of the United States.

(2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—The members of the Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

(3) STAFF.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Chair of the Commission may, without regard to the civil service laws and regulations, appoint and terminate an executive director and such other additional personnel as may be necessary to enable the Commission to perform its duties. The employment of an executive director shall be subject to confirmation by the Commission.

(B) COMPENSATION.—The Chair of the Commission may fix the compensation of the executive director and other personnel without regard to chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating to classification of positions and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the executive director and other personnel may not exceed the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(4) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Any Federal Government employee may be detailed to the Commission without reimbursement, and such detail shall be without

interruption or loss of civil service status or privilege.

(5) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMITTENT SERVICES.—The Chair of the Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(e) TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.—The Commission shall terminate 60 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under subsection (b)(4)(E).

(f) FUNDING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make available to the Commission such amounts as the Secretary and the Chair of the Commission jointly consider appropriate for the Commission to perform its duties under this section.

(g) ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement each recommendation included in a report under subsection (b)(4) that the Secretary considers feasible and advisable and can be implemented without further legislative action.

(2) REPORTS.—Not later than 120 days after receipt of a report under subparagraphs (A) through (D) of subsection (b)(4), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the following:

(A) An assessment of the feasibility and advisability of each recommendation contained in such report.

(B) For each recommendation assessed as feasible and advisable—

(i) if such recommendation does not require further legislative action for implementation, a description of the actions taken, and to be taken, by the Secretary to implement such recommendation; and

(ii) if such recommendation requires further legislative action for implementation, recommendations for such legislative action.

SEC. 504. ADVANCE APPROPRIATIONS FOR CERTAIN ACCOUNTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 117 is amended—

(1) by striking ''medical care accounts of the Department'' each place it appears and inserting ''covered accounts of the Department'';

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) by striking ''medical care accounts of the Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs account'' and inserting ''accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs account'';

(B) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''Veterans Health Administration,'' after ''(1)'';

(C) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''Veterans Health Administration,'' after ''(2)'';

(D) in paragraph (3), by inserting ''Veterans Health Administration,'' after ''(3)'';

(E) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (3) as paragraphs (7) through (9), respectively;

(F) by inserting before paragraph (7), as redesignated by subparagraph (E), the following new paragraphs:

''(1) Veterans Benefits Administration, Compensation and Pensions.

''(2) Veterans Benefits Administration, Readjustment Benefits.

''(3) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Insurance and Indemnities.

''(4) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Housing Benefit Program Fund.

''(5) Veterans Benefits Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation Loans Program Account.

''(6) Veterans Benefits Administration, Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program Account.''; and

(G) in the subsection heading, by striking ''MEDICAL CARE ACCOUNTS'' and inserting ''COVERED ACCOUNTS''; and

(3) in the section heading, by striking ''**CERTAIN MEDICAL CARE ACCOUNTS**'' and inserting ''**CERTAIN ACCOUNTS**''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to fiscal year 2016 and each subsequent fiscal year.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking the first paragraph (37) and inserting the following:

''(37) information on estimates of appropriations for the fiscal year following the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted for the following accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs:

''(A) Veterans Benefits Administration, Compensation and Pensions.

''(B) Veterans Benefits Administration, Readjustment Benefits.

''(C) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Insurance and Indemnities.

''(D) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Housing Benefit Program Fund.

''(E) Veterans Benefits Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation Loans Program Account.

''(F) Veterans Benefits Administration, Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program Account.

''(G) Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services.

''(H) Veterans Health Administration, Medical Support and Compliance.

''(I) Veterans Health Administration, Medical Facilities.''.

(d) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Such section is further amended by redesignating the second paragraph (37), as added by section 11(a)(2) of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–352; 124 Stat. 3881), as paragraph (39).

SEC. 505. PUBLIC ACCESS TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RESEARCH AND DATA SHARING BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNET WEBSITE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make available on an Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs available to the public the following:

(1) Data files that contain information on research of the Department.

(2) A data dictionary on each data file.

(3) Instructions for how to obtain access to each data file for use in research.

(b) PUBLIC ACCESS TO MANUSCRIPTS ON DEPARTMENT FUNDED RESEARCH.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than 540 days after the effective date specified in subsection (e), the Secretary shall require, as a condition on the use of any data gathered or formulated from research funded by the Department, that any final, peer-reviewed manuscript prepared for publication that uses such data be submitted to the Secretary for deposit in the digital archive under paragraph (2) and publication under paragraph (3).

(2) DIGITAL ARCHIVE.—Not later than 540 days after the effective date specified in subsection (e), the Secretary shall—

(A) establish a digital archive consisting of manuscripts described in paragraph (1); or

(B) partner with another executive agency to compile such manuscripts in a digital archive.

(3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—

(A) AVAILABILITY OF ARCHIVE.—The Secretary shall ensure that the digital archive under paragraph (2) and the contents of such archive are available to the public via a publicly accessible Internet website at no cost to the public.

(B) AVAILABILITY OF MANUSCRIPTS.—The Secretary shall ensure that each manuscript submitted to the Secretary under paragraph (1) is available to the public under subparagraph (A) not later than one year after the official date on which the manuscript is otherwise published.

(4) CONSISTENT WITH COPYRIGHT LAW.—The Secretary shall carry out this subsection in a manner consistent with applicable copyright law.

(5) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date the Secretary begins making manuscripts available to the public under this subsection and not less frequently than once each year thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the implementation of this subsection during the most recent one-year period.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include for the period of the report:

(i) The number of manuscripts submitted under paragraph (1).

(ii) The titles of such manuscripts.

(iii) The authors of such manuscripts.

(iv) For each such manuscript, the name and issue number or volume number, as the case may be, of the journal or other publication in which such manuscript was published.

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATA SHARING BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (e), the Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Joint Executive Committee established by section 320(a) of title 38, United States Code, shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense options and recommendations for the establishment of a program for long-term cooperation and data sharing between and within the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to facilitate research on outcomes of military service, readjustment after combat deployment, and other topics of importance to the following:

(1) Veterans.

(2) Members of the Armed Forces.

(3) Family members of veterans.

(4) Family members of members of the Armed Forces.

(5) Members of communities that have a significant population of veterans or members of the Armed Forces.

(d) EXECUTIVE AGENCY DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''executive agency'' has the meaning given that term in section 133 of title 41, United States Code.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 506. ASSESSMENT BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE BY VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION.

(a) ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(1) conduct an assessment of the process by which the Veterans Benefits Administration informs veterans, veterans service organizations, and such other persons as the Comptroller General considers appropriate regarding the furnishing of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to determine the extent to which the

process results in disseminated information that—

(A) adequately supports and improves the timeliness and accuracy of decisions made by the Administration with respect to claims for disability compensation and such other benefits furnished under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as the Comptroller General considers appropriate; and

(B) encourages the filing of fully developed claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary; and

(2) assess how the Veterans Benefits Administration notifies each claimant during, and as part of, any electronic filing process established by the Secretary for the filing of applications for disability compensation and such other benefits under laws administered by the Secretary as the Comptroller General considers appropriate that services may be available to the claimant from a veterans service organization.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the findings of the Comptroller General under subsection (a). Such report shall include such recommendations as the Comptroller General may have for legislative or administrative action to improve the availability of information made available to the public by the Veterans Benefits Administration regarding the furnishing of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(c) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''veterans service organization'' means an organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 507. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON ADVISORY COMMITTEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the advisory committees of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection (a)—

(1) shall include—

(A) recommendations or proposals for continuing, modifying, or terminating certain advisory committees, including noting areas of overlap and duplication among the advisory committees; and

(B) such other information as the Comptroller General considers appropriate; and

(2) may include—

(A) a description of each advisory committee, including with respect to each committee—

(i) the purpose of the committee;

(ii) the commencement date of the committee; and

(iii) the anticipated termination date of the committee;

(B) a summary of the anticipated expenses and the actual expenses incurred for each advisory committee during the most recent three fiscal years ending before the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(C) with respect to meetings held by each advisory committee—

(i) the frequency with which each committee has met during the shorter of—

(I) the most recent three fiscal years ending before the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(II) the life of the committee;

(ii) the date of the most recent meeting held by the committee before such date of enactment; and

(iii) the date of the most recent report or other written product developed by the committee before such date of enactment.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE VI—IMPROVEMENT OF PROCESSING OF CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION

Subtitle A—Claims Based on Military Sexual Trauma

SEC. 601. MEDICAL EXAMINATION AND OPINION FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION CLAIMS BASED ON MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5103A(d) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3)(A) In the case of a claim for disability compensation based on a mental health condition related to military sexual trauma, the Secretary shall treat an examination or opinion as being necessary to make a decision on a claim for purposes of paragraph (1) if the evidence of record before the Secretary, taking into consideration all information and lay or medical evidence (including statements of the claimant)—

''(i)(I) contains competent evidence that the claimant has a current disability, or persistent or recurrent symptoms of disability; and

''(II) indicates that the disability or symptoms may be associated with the claimant's active military, naval, or air service; but

''(ii) does not contain a diagnosis or opinion by a mental health professional that may assist in corroborating the occurrence of a military sexual trauma stressor related to a diagnosable mental health condition.

''(B) In this paragraph, the term 'military sexual trauma' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this paragraph, and shall include 'sexual harassment' (as so specified).''.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the number of examinations and opinions conducted by the Secretary pursuant to paragraph (3) of section 5103A(d) of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)), including the following:

(1) The number of examinations conducted using a standardized disability assessment.

(2) The number of examinations conducted using a non-standardized clinical interview.

SEC. 602. CASE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICERS FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA SUPPORT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall assign to each individual seeking compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary based on military sexual trauma a case representative officer who shall provide advice and general information to such individual on the claims process for such compensation. Each case representative officer so assigned shall be assigned from among current personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) LIAISON.—A case representative officer assigned to an individual under subsection (a) shall be responsible for serving as a liaison between the individual, an authorized agent or attorney of the individual under section 5904 of title 38, United States Code, or an otherwise accredited representative of the individual, and the Department of Veterans Affairs on matters relating to the claim of the individual for compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary.

(c) CASE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICER REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE.—Each case representative officer assigned under subsection (a) shall be competent and knowledgeable about the following:

(A) The claims adjudication process and applicable laws, regulations, and other authority applicable to the adjudication of disability claims based on military sexual trauma.

(B) Such other services to victims of sexual trauma as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO WHICH ASSIGNED.—A case representative officer may not be assigned to more individuals described in subsection (a) than, as determined by the Secretary, is appropriate for the provision of individual case management assistance by such officer.

(d) INFORMATION ON BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS RELATING TO MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make available to the public information on the availability of case representative officers under subsection (a) to assist in the application for benefits based on military sexual trauma. The Secretary shall revise and update the information so made available in order to ensure that the information is as current as possible.

(2) INDIVIDUALS SEPARATING FROM MILITARY SERVICE.—The Secretary shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, ensure that individuals who are being separated from the active military, naval, or air service are provided appropriate information about programs, requirements, and procedures for applying for benefits based on military sexual trauma and the availability of case representative officers under subsection (a).

(e) INFORMATION ON TRAINING FOR AGENTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED CASE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICER.—The Secretary shall make available to the authorized agent or attorney of an individual assigned a case representative under subsection (a), or to the otherwise accredited representative of the individual, any relevant materials used to train such case representative officer for the duties of such position.

(f) ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN VETERANS CONSIDERATION OF MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE COORDINATION BETWEEN VBA AND VHA ON BENEFITS FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The Advisory Committee on Women Veterans established under section 542 of title 38, United States Code, shall undertake actions to identify mechanisms to enhance coordination between the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration in the provision of benefits based on military sexual trauma, including the identification of barriers to the appropriate provision of benefits for military sexual trauma by such Administrations and of means of eliminating or reducing such barriers.

(g) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the following:

(1) A certification whether or not the case representative officers assigned under subsection (a) during the preceding year met the requirements specified in subsection (c).

(2) A description of the current training the Secretary provides to employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration on claims for benefits based on military sexual trauma, including the frequency, length, and content of such training.

(3) A description of current policies and procedures on the training the Secretary provides to case representative officers, including the current position descriptions for case representative officers.

(4) A description of current efforts to coordinate activities and assistance provided to individuals who seek care or benefits for military sexual trauma between the Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration, including the efforts of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans under subsection (f).

(h) SUNSET.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—No case representative officer may be assigned under subsection (a) after December 31, 2018.

(2) CONTINUATION OF DUTIES AFTER SUNSET DATE.—Paragraph (1) shall not be construed to prohibit any case representative officer assigned to an individual before the date specified in that paragraph from performing duties pursuant to this section after that date with respect to a claim for which that case representative officer was assigned to such individual before that date.

(i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ACTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL, OR AIR SERVICE.—The term ''active military, naval, or air service'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section, and shall include ''sexual harassment'' (as so specified).

SEC. 603. REPORT ON STANDARD OF PROOF FOR SERVICE-CONNECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS RELATED TO MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the current standard of proof for service-connection under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, for covered mental health conditions based on military sexual trauma.

(b) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Secretary shall include in the report under subsection (a) any recommendations the Secretary considers appropriate to improve the adjudication of claims for compensation based on military sexual trauma, including—

(1) recommendations for an appropriate standard of proof for such claims if the Secretary considers such recommendations advisable; and

(2) recommendations for legislative action, if necessary, to carry out such improvement.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ACTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL, OR AIR SERVICE.—The term ''active military, naval, or air service'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) COVERED MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.—The term ''covered mental health condition'' means post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, or other mental health diagnosis that the Secretary determines to be related to military sexual trauma.

(3) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section, and shall include ''sexual harassment'' (as so specified).

SEC. 604. REPORTS ON CLAIMS FOR DISABILITIES INCURRED OR AGGRAVATED BY MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

(a) REPORTS.—Not later than December 1, 2014, and each year thereafter through 2018, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the covered claims submitted to the Secretary during the previous fiscal year.

(b) ELEMENTS.—Each report under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) The number of covered claims submitted to or considered by the Secretary during the fiscal year covered by the report.

(2) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1), the number and percentage of such claims—

(A) submitted by each gender;

(B) that were approved, including the number and percentage of such approved claims submitted by each gender; and

(C) that were denied, including the number and percentage of such denied claims submitted by each gender.

(3) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1) that were approved, the number and percentage, listed by each gender, of claims assigned to each rating percentage of disability.

(4) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1) that were denied—

(A) the three most common reasons given by the Secretary under section 5104(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code, for such denials; and

(B) the number of denials that were based on the failure of a veteran to report for a medical examination.

(5) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1) that were resubmitted to the Secretary after denial in a previous adjudication—

(A) the number of such claims submitted to or considered by the Secretary during the fiscal year covered by the report;

(B) the number and percentage of such claims—

(i) submitted by each gender;

(ii) that were approved, including the number and percentage of such approved claims submitted by each gender; and

(iii) that were denied, including the number and percentage of such denied claims submitted by each gender;

(C) the number and percentage, listed by each gender, of claims assigned to each rating percentage of disability; and

(D) of such claims that were again denied—

(i) the three most common reasons given by the Secretary under section 5104(b)(1) of such title for such denials; and

(ii) the number of denials that were based on the failure of a veteran to report for a medical examination.

(6) The number of covered claims that, as of the end of the fiscal year covered by the report, are pending and, separately, the number of such claims on appeal.

(7) For the fiscal year covered by the report, the average number of days that covered claims take to complete beginning on the date on which the claim is submitted.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ACTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL, OR AIR SERVICE.—The term ''active military, naval, or air service'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) COVERED CLAIMS.—The term ''covered claims'' means claims for disability compensation submitted to the Secretary based on post traumatic stress disorder alleged to have been incurred or aggravated by military sexual trauma.

(3) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section, and shall include ''sexual harassment'' (as so specified).

Subtitle B—Claims for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

SEC. 611. PROGRAM ON TREATMENT OF CERTAIN APPLICATIONS FOR DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION AS FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of expediting the treatment of a covered dependency and indemnity compensation claim.

(b) COVERED DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION CLAIMS.—For purposes of this section, a covered dependency and indemnity compensation claim is a claim submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code, for which the claimant—

(1) applies for such compensation within one-year of the death of the veteran upon whose service the claim is based;

(2) was the dependent on the claim of a veteran who was receiving benefits for one or more service-connected conditions as of the date of death;

(3) submits a death certificate or other evidence with the claim indicating that the veteran's death was due to a service-connected or compensable disability; and

(4) in the case that the claimant is the spouse of the deceased veteran, certifies that he or she has not remarried since the date of the veteran's death.

(c) DURATION.—The program shall be carried out during the one-year period beginning on the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) LOCATIONS.—The program shall be carried out at the Pension Management Center of the Department of Veterans Affairs or such centers selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

(e) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 270 days after the date on which the program is completed, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The number of covered dependency and indemnity compensation claims that were adjudicated under the program, disaggregated by the following:

(i) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the spouse of a deceased veteran.

(ii) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the child of a deceased veteran.

(iii) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the parent of a deceased veteran.

(B) The number of covered dependency and indemnity compensation claims that were adjudicated under the program and for which compensation was not awarded, disaggregated by clauses (i) through (iii) of subparagraph (A).

(C) A comparison of the accuracy and timeliness of claims adjudicated under the program with claims submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code, that were not provided expeditious treatment under the program.

(D) The findings of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(E) Such recommendations as the Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action to improve the adjudication of claims submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 612. REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ON IMPROVING TIMELINESS AND ACCURACY OF ADMINISTRATION OF CLAIMS FOR DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION AND PENSION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES AND CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 455 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report with recommendations for legislative or administrative actions to improve the timeliness and accuracy with which the Secretary processes and adjudicates claims for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code, and pension under sections 1541 and 1542 of such title.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle C—Agency of Original Jurisdiction

SEC. 621. WORKING GROUP TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE WORK CREDIT AND WORK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS OF VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION IN AN ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a working group to assess and develop recommendations for the improvement of the employee work credit and work management systems of the Veterans Benefits Administration in an electronic environment.

(b) COMPOSITION.—The working group shall be composed of the following:

(1) The Secretary or the Secretary's designee.

(2) Individuals selected by the Secretary from among employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who handle claims for compensation and pension benefits and are recommended to the Secretary by a labor organization for purposes of this section, including at least one of each of the following individuals:

(A) A veterans service representative.

(B) A rating veterans service representative.

(C) A decision review officer.

(3) Not fewer than three individuals selected by the Secretary to represent different organizations recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(4) Individuals selected by the Secretary—

(A) that are not employees of the Department; and

(B) that are experts in work credit and work management systems.

(c) DUTIES.—The duties of the working group are to assess and develop recommendations for the following:

(1) The improvement of the employee work credit and work management systems of the Veterans Benefits Administration in an electronic environment.

(2) A scientific, data based methodology to be used in revising the employee work credit system of the Department to improve the quality and quantity of work produced by employees of the Department.

(3) The improvement of the resource allocation model of the Veterans Benefits Administration, with a focus on the processing of claims in an electronic environment.

(4) A schedule by which the revisions referred to in paragraph (2) will be implemented by the Department.

(d) REVIEW AND INCORPORATION OF FINDINGS FROM PRIOR STUDY.—In carrying out its duties under subsection (c), the working group shall review the findings and conclusions of previous studies of the employee work credit and work management systems of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

(e) ROLE OF THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall consider the recommendations of the working group and implement such recommendations as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the establishment of the working group, the working group shall submit to Congress a report on the progress of the working group.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the establishment of the working group, the Secretary shall submit to Congress the methodology described in subsection (c)(2) and the schedule described in subsection (c)(4) that the Secretary has decided to implement pursuant to subsection (e).

(g) IMPLEMENTATION OF METHODOLOGY AND SCHEDULE.—After submitting the report under subsection (f), the Secretary shall take such actions as may be necessary to apply the methodology described in subsection (c)(2) and the schedule described in subsection (c)(4) that the Secretary has decided to implement pursuant to subsection (e).

SEC. 622. TASK FORCE ON RETENTION AND TRAINING OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLAIMS PROCESSORS AND ADJUDICATORS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a task force to assess retention and training of claims processors and adjudicators that are employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

(b) COMPOSITION.—The task force shall be composed of the following:

(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs or designee.

(2) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management or designee.

(3) The Commissioner of Social Security or designee.

(4) An individual selected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs who represents an organization recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(5) Such other individuals selected by the Secretary who represent such other organizations and institutions as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) DURATION.—The task force established under subsection (a) shall terminate not later than two years after the date on which the task force is established under such subsection.

(d) DUTIES.—The duties of the task force are as follows:

(1) To identify key skills required by claims processors and adjudicators to perform the duties of claims processors and adjudicators in the various claims processing and adjudication positions throughout the Federal Government.

(2) To identify reasons for employee attrition from claims processing positions.

(3) To coordinate with educational institutions to develop training and programs of education for members of the Armed Forces to prepare such members for employment in claims processing and adjudication positions in the Federal Government.

(4) To identify and coordinate offices of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs located throughout the United States to provide information about, and promotion of, available claims processing positions to members of the Armed Forces transitioning to civilian life and to veterans with disabilities.

(5) To establish performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the task force.

(6) Not later than one year after the date of the establishment of the task force, to develop a Government-wide strategic and operational plan for promoting employment of veterans in claims processing positions in the Federal Government.

(7) To establish performance measures to assess the plan developed under paragraph (6), to assess the implementation of such plan, and to revise such plan as the task force considers appropriate.

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) SUBMITTAL OF PLAN.—Not later than one year after the date of the establishment of the task force, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the plan developed by the task force under subsection (d)(6).

(2) ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 120 days after the termination of the task force, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that assesses the implementation of the plan developed by the task force under subsection (d)(6).

SEC. 623. REPORTS ON REQUESTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR RECORDS OF OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.

(a) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter through the date that is 910 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the attempts of the Department of Veterans Affairs to obtain records necessary to adjudicate claims for benefits from another department or agency of the Federal Government during the 180-day period ending on the date of such report.

(b) ELEMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each report shall set forth the following:

(A) For the period covered by such report, the following:

(i) The total number of requests made by the Department.

(ii) The types of records requested.

(iii) The number of requests made before the receipt of each record.

(iv) The amount of time between the initial request for each record and the receipt of each record.

(v) The number of occurrences of the receipt of a record after the adjudication of the claim for which the record was sought.

(vi) A description of the efforts of the Secretary to expedite the delivery of records to the Department from other departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

(B) Such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate in light of such report.

(2) PRESENTATION.—The information in a report under clause (i) through (v) of paragraph (1)(A) shall be set forth separately for each department and agency of the Federal Government covered by such report.

SEC. 624. RECOGNITION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF INDIAN TRIBES IN THE PREPARATION, PRESENTATION, AND PROSECUTION OF CLAIMS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 5902(a)(1) is amended by inserting ", including Indian tribes (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b))" after "as the Secretary may approve".

SEC. 625. PROGRAM ON PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS IN IMPROVING QUALITY OF CLAIMS FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program

to assess the feasibility and advisability of entering into memoranda of understanding with local governments and tribal organizations—

(1) to improve the quality of claims submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, and pension under chapter 15 of such title; and

(2) to provide assistance to veterans who may be eligible for such compensation or pension in submitting such claims.

(b) MINIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—In carrying out the program required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall enter into, or maintain existing, memoranda of understanding with at least—

(1) two tribal organizations; and

(2) 10 State or local governments.

(c) DURATION.—The program shall be carried out during the two-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) REPORT.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that includes the following:

(A) A description of the implementation and operation of the program, including a description of outreach conducted by the Secretary to tribal organizations and State and local governments.

(B) An evaluation of the program, including the total number of memoranda of understanding entered into or maintained by the Secretary.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the termination of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that includes the following:

(A) A description of the implementation and operation of the program, including a description of outreach conducted by the Secretary to tribal organizations and State and local governments.

(B) An evaluation of the program, including the total number of memoranda of understanding entered into or maintained by the Secretary.

(C) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(D) Such recommendations for continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(e) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''tribal organization'' has the meaning given that term in section 3765 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 626. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NOTICE OF AVERAGE TIMES FOR PROCESSING COMPENSATION CLAIMS.

(a) PUBLIC NOTICE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, to the extent practicable, post the information described in subsection (b)—

(1) in physical locations, such as Regional Offices or other claims in-take facilities, that the Secretary considers appropriate;

(2) on the Internet website of the Department; and

(3) through other mediums or using such other methods, including collaboration with veterans service organizations, as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(b) INFORMATION DESCRIBED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The information described in this subsection is the average processing time of the claims described in paragraph (2).

(2) CLAIMS DESCRIBED.—The claims described in this paragraph are each of the following types of claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs:

(A) A fully developed claim.

(B) A claim that is not fully developed.

(3) UPDATE OF INFORMATION.—The information described in this subsection shall be updated not less frequently than once each fiscal quarter.

(c) EXPIRATION OF REQUIREMENTS.—The requirements of subsection (a) shall expire on December 31, 2015.

(d) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''veterans service organization'' means an organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 627. QUARTERLY REPORTS ON PROGRESS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IN ELIMINATING BACKLOG OF CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION THAT HAVE NOT BEEN ADJUDICATED.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less frequently than quarterly thereafter through calendar year 2015, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the backlog of claims filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs for compensation that have not been adjudicated by the Department.

(b) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) For each month through calendar year 2015, a projection of the following:

(A) The number of claims completed.

(B) The number of claims received.

(C) The number of claims on backlog at the end of the month.

(D) The number of claims pending at the end of the month.

(E) The number of appeals pending at the end of the month.

(F) A description of the status of the implementation of initiatives carried out by the Secretary to address the backlog, including the expected impact of those initiatives on accuracy and timeliness of adjudication of claims.

(2) For each quarter through calendar year 2015, a projection of the average accuracy of disability determinations for compensation claims that require a disability rating (or disability decision).

(3) For each month during the most recently completed quarter, the following:

(A) The number of claims completed.

(B) The number of claims received.

(C) The number of claims on backlog at the end of the month.

(D) The number of claims pending at the end of the month.

(E) The number of appeals pending at the end of the month.

(F) A description of the status of the implementation of initiatives carried out by the Secretary to address the backlog, including the impact of those initiatives on accuracy and timeliness of adjudication of claims.

(G) An assessment of the accuracy of disability determinations for compensation claims that require a disability rating (or disability decision).

(4) For the most recently completed quarter—

(A) the number of cases physically received at the Board of Veterans' Appeals and docketed;

(B) the number of cases pending at the Board of Veterans' Appeals at the end of the quarter;

(C) the number of cases physically at the Board of Veterans' Appeals at the end of the quarter;

(D) the number of notices of disagreement and appeals filed to the agency of original jurisdiction referred to in section 7105(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code; and

(E) the number of decisions made by the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the percentage of such decisions that were allowed, remanded, denied, or otherwise disposed of.

(c) AVAILABILITY TO PUBLIC.—The Secretary shall make each report submitted under subsection (a) available to the public.

(d) ON BACKLOG AND PENDING DEFINED.—In this section, the terms ''on backlog'' and ''pending'', with respect to a claim for compensation received by the Secretary, shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section.

SEC. 628. REPORTS ON USE OF EXISTING AUTHORITIES TO EXPEDITE BENEFITS DECISIONS.

(a) REPORT ON CURRENT USE OF TEMPORARY, INTERMEDIATE, AND PROVISIONAL RATING DECISIONS.—

(1) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the use of temporary, intermediate, and provisional rating decisions to expedite the benefits decisions of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) REPORT ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) With respect to temporary and intermediate rating decisions, the following:

(i) The number of temporary and intermediate rating decisions issued by the Department during each of fiscal years 2011, 2012, and 2013.

(ii) A description of any reasons or obstacles that prevent use of existing authorities to issue temporary or intermediate rating decisions.

(iii) A description of the Quick Pay Disability initiative, including the rationale for not expanding the initiative beyond pilot program status.

(B) With respect to provisional rating decisions, the following:

(i) The number of provisional rating decisions issued by the Department during the oldest claims first initiative.

(ii) Of the provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative—

(I) the number of such decisions that involved a claim granted;

(II) the number of such decisions that involved a claim denied; and

(III) the number of such decisions that involved a claim granted in part or a claim denied in part.

(iii) A statement of the most common reasons claims were not granted earlier under the oldest claims first initiative when there was sufficient evidence to render an award of benefits in the provisional rating decision.

(iv) The average number of days to issue a provisional rating decision under the oldest claims first initiative.

(v) Of the total number of decisions that were completed under the oldest claims first initiative—

(I) the number that were Category 1 claims and received a final rating decision; and

(II) the number that were Category 2 claims and received a provisional rating decision.

(vi) The number of rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first imitative that involved a brokered claim, set forth by number of such claims by Regional Office of the Department, including—

(I) the number of brokered claims received by each Regional Office; and

(II) the number of brokered claims issued by each Regional Office.

(vii) The number of provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative with respect to which the veteran requested that the provisional decision become final in order to appeal.

(viii) The number of provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative with respect to which the veteran requested an appeal after the expiration of the 1-year period beginning on the date of notification of the provisional rating decision.

(ix) An assessment of the accuracy of provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative, set forth by Category 1 claims and Category 2 claims.

(C) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate for purposes of the report.

(3) SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION.—If the Secretary continues to obtain information on rating decisions under clauses (vii) and (viii) of paragraph (2)(B) after the date of the submittal of the report required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the committees of Congress referred to in paragraph (1) a report on such information that supplements the information on such clauses in the report under paragraph (1) when the Secretary completes accumulation of such information.

(b) PLAN FOR INCREASE IN USE OF TEMPORARY OR INTERMEDIATE RATING DECISIONS.—

(1) REPORT ON PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth a plan to increase the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions to expedite benefit decisions of the Department when the record contains sufficient evidence to grant any claim at issue, including service connection.

(2) PLAN ELEMENTS.—The plan required under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) Mechanisms to overcome obstacles to the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions, including mechanisms (such as upgrades) to assure the ability of the Veterans Benefits Management System to facilitate the issuance of temporary or intermediate rating decisions.

(B) Mechanisms to ensure that appropriate claimant populations, such as claimants who file complex or multi-issue disability compensation claims, benefit from the availability of temporary or intermediate rating decisions.

(C) Mechanisms to provide for the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions, including mechanisms to resolve whether a request by a claimant or claimant representative should trigger use of a temporary or intermediate rating decision depending on the circumstances of the claimant.

(D) Mechanisms to prevent the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions in lieu of a final rating decision when a final rating decision could be made with little or no additional claim development.

(E) Such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate to increase the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions to expedite benefit decisions of the Department.

SEC. 629. REPORTS ON DEPARTMENT DISABILITY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS AND PREVENTION OF UNNECESSARY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS.

(a) REPORT ON DISABILITY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the furnishing of general medical and specialty medical examinations by the Department of Veterans Affairs for purposes of adjudicating claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The number of general medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

(B) The number of general medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating a claim in which a comprehensive joint examination was conducted, but for which no disability relating to a joint, bone, or muscle had been asserted as an issue in the claim.

(C) The number of specialty medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating a claim.

(D) The number of specialty medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating a claim in which one or more joint examinations were conducted.

(E) A summary with citations to any medical and scientific studies that provide a basis for determining that three repetitions is adequate to determine the effect of repetitive use on functional impairments.

(F) The names of all examination reports, including general medical examinations and Disability Benefits Questionnaires, used for evaluation of compensation and pension disability claims which require measurement of repeated ranges of motion testing and the number of examinations requiring such measurements which were conducted in fiscal year 2012.

(G) The average amount of time taken by an individual conducting a medical examination to perform the three repetitions of movement of each joint.

(H) A discussion of whether there are more efficient and effective scientifically reliable methods of testing for functional loss on repetitive use of an extremity other than the three time repetition currently used by the Department.

(I) Recommendations as to the continuation of the practice of measuring functional impairment by using three repetitions of movement of each joint during the examination as a criteria for evaluating the effect of repetitive motion on functional impairment with supporting rationale.

(b) REPORT AND PLAN TO PREVENT THE ORDERING OF UNNECESSARY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the efforts of the Secretary in reducing the necessity for in-person disability examinations and other efforts to comply with the provisions of section 5125 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) Criteria used by the Secretary to determine if a claim is eligible for the Acceptable Clinical Evidence initiative.

(B) The number of claims determined to be eligible for the Acceptable Clinical Evidence initiative during the period beginning on the date of the initiation of the initiative and ending on the date of the enactment of this Act, disaggregated—

(i) by fiscal year; and

(ii) by claims determined eligible based in whole or in part on medical evidence provided by a private health care provider.

(C) The total number of claims determined to be eligible for the Acceptable Clinical Evidence initiative that required an employee of the Department to supplement the evidence with information obtained during a telephone interview with a claimant or health care provider.

(D) Information on any other initiatives or efforts, including disability benefits questionnaires, of the Department to further encourage the use of medical evidence provided by a private health care provider and reliance upon reports of a medical examination administered by a private physician if the report is sufficiently complete to be adequate for the purposes of adjudicating a claim.

(E) A plan—

(i) to measure, track, and prevent the ordering of unnecessary medical examinations when the provision by a claimant of a medical examination administered by a private physician in support of a claim for benefits under chapter 11 or 15 of title 38, United States Code, is adequate for the purpose of making a decision on that claim; and

(ii) that includes the actions the Secretary will take to eliminate any request by the Department for a medical examination in the case of a claim for benefits under chapter 11 or 15 of such title in support of which a claimant submits medical evidence or a medical opinion provided by a private health care provider that is competent, credible, probative, and otherwise adequate for purposes of making a decision on that claim.

Subtitle D—Board of Veterans' Appeals and Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

SEC. 631. TREATMENT OF CERTAIN MISFILED DOCUMENTS AS A NOTICE OF APPEAL TO THE COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

Section 7266 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e)(1) If a person adversely affected by a final decision of the Board, who has not filed a notice of appeal with the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims under subsection (a), misfiles a document with the Board or the agency of original jurisdiction referred to in section 7105(b)(1) of this title that expresses disagreement with such decision and a clear intent to seek review of such decision by the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, not later than 120 days after the date of such decision, such document shall be treated as timely filed under subsection (a).

''(2) The treatment of misfiled documents under paragraph (1) does not limit equitable relief that may be otherwise available to a person described in that paragraph.''.

SEC. 632. DETERMINATION OF MANNER OF APPEARANCE FOR HEARINGS BEFORE BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7107 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by striking ''in subsection (f)'' and inserting ''in subsection (g)'';

(2) by redesignating subsection (f) as subsection (g); and

(3) by striking subsections (d) and (e) and inserting the following new subsections:

''(d)(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a hearing before the Board shall be conducted through picture and voice transmission, by electronic or other means, in such a manner that the appellant is not present in the same location as the members of the Board during the hearing.

''(2)(A) A hearing before the Board shall be conducted in person upon the request of an appellant.

''(B) In the absence of a request under subparagraph (A), a hearing before the Board may also be conducted in person as the Board considers appropriate.

''(e)(1) In a case in which a hearing before the Board is to be held as described in subsection (d)(1), the Secretary shall provide suitable facilities and equipment to the Board or other components of the Department to enable an appellant located at an appropriate facility within the area served by a regional office to participate as so described.

''(2) Any hearing conducted as described in subsection (d)(1) shall be conducted in the same manner as, and shall be considered the equivalent of, a personal hearing.

''(f)(1) In a case in which a hearing before the Board is to be held as described in subsection (d)(2), the appellant may request that the hearing be held at the principal location of the Board or at a facility of the Department located within the area served by a regional office of the Department.

''(2) A hearing to be held within an area served by a regional office of the Department shall (except as provided in paragraph (3)) be scheduled to be held in accordance with the place of the case on the docket under subsection (a) relative to other cases on the docket for which hearings are scheduled to be held within that area.

''(3) A hearing to be held within an area served by a regional office of the Department may, for cause shown, be advanced on motion for an earlier hearing. Any such motion shall set forth succinctly the grounds upon which the motion is based. Such a motion may be granted only—

''(A) if the case involves interpretation of law of general application affecting other claims;

''(B) if the appellant is seriously ill or is under severe financial hardship; or

''(C) for other sufficient cause shown.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to cases received by the Board of Veterans' Appeals pursuant to notices of disagreement submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE VII—OUTREACH MATTERS

SEC. 701. PROGRAM TO INCREASE COORDINATION OF OUTREACH EFFORTS BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of using State and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations—

(1) to increase awareness of veterans regarding benefits and services for veterans; and

(2) to improve coordination of outreach activities regarding such benefits and services between the Secretary and Federal, State, and local government and nonprofit providers of health care and benefit services for veterans.

(b) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the program for a two-year period.

(c) GRANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the program through the competitive award of grants to State and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations—

(A) to increase the awareness of veterans regarding benefits and services for veterans; and

(B) to improve coordination of outreach activities regarding such benefits and services between the Secretary and Federal, State, and local government and nonprofit providers of health care and benefit services for veterans.

(2) APPLICATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—A State or local government agency or nonprofit organization seeking a grant under the program shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor in such form and in such manner as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(B) ELEMENTS.—Each application submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) A description of the consultations, if any, with the Department of Veterans Affairs in the development of any proposal under the application.

(ii) A description of the project for which the applicant is seeking a grant under the program, including a plan to coordinate under the program, to the greatest extent possible, the outreach activities of Federal, State, and local government agencies that provide health care, benefits, and services for veterans and nonprofit organizations that provide such care, benefits, and services to enhance the awareness and availability of such care, benefits, and services.

(iii) An agreement to report to the Secretary standardized data and other performance measures necessary for the Secretary to evaluate the program and to facilitate evaluation of projects for which grants are awarded under the program.

(iv) Such other information as the Secretary may require.

(3) CONSIDERATIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In awarding grants under the program to carry out projects, the Secretary shall consider—

(i) where the projects will be carried out and which populations are targeted; and

(ii) the likelihood that each potential grantee will successfully carry out the grant proposal.

(B) CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING LOCATION AND TARGET POPULATION.—In taking the matters specified in subparagraph (A)(ii) into consideration, the Secretary shall consider in particular the advisability of awarding grants for projects—

(i) carried out in areas with populations that have a high proportion of veteran representation;

(ii) carried out in a variety of geographic areas, including urban, rural, and highly rural areas; and

(iii) that target a variety of veteran populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations, and older populations.

(4) USE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary shall establish appropriate uses of grant amounts received under the program.

(5) OVERSIGHT OF USE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary shall establish appropriate mechanisms for oversight of the use of grant amounts received under the program, including the evidence grantees must submit to demonstrate use of grant amounts and procedures for the recovery of grant amounts that were improperly used.

(6) LIMITATION.—In a fiscal year, not more than 20 percent of all grant amounts awarded in that fiscal year may be awarded to a single State entity.

(d) STATE MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary may not make a grant to a State under subsection (c) unless that State agrees that, with respect to the costs to be incurred by the State in carrying out the program or projects for which the grant was awarded, the State will make available (directly or through donations from public or private entities) non-Federal contributions in an amount equal to 50 percent of Federal funds provided under the grant.

(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section the following:

(1) $2,500,000 for fiscal year 2015.

(2) $2,500,000 for fiscal year 2016.

(f) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the completion of the first calendar year beginning after the date of the commencement of the program, and not less frequently than once every year thereafter for the duration of the program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report evaluating the program and the projects supported by grants awarded under the program.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(B) An assessment of the benefit to veterans of the program.

(C) The performance measures used by the Secretary for purposes of the program and data showing the performance of grantees under the program under such measures.

(D) The recommendations of the Secretary as to the feasibility and advisability of continuing or expanding or modifying the program.

(g) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 702. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND STATES ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 is amended by inserting after section 6306 the following new section:

''§ 6306A. Cooperative agreements with States

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements and arrangements with various State agencies and State departments to carry out this chapter and to otherwise carry out, coordinate, improve, or enhance outreach activities of the Department and the States.

''(b) REPORT.—The Secretary shall include in each report submitted under section 6308 of this title a description of the agreements and arrangements entered into by the Secretary under subsection (a).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 6306 the following new item:

''6306A. Cooperative agreements with States.''.

SEC. 703. ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish an advisory committee on outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The advisory committee shall be composed of individuals selected by the Secretary from among the following:

(1) To the maximum extent practicable, individuals who are eminent in their respective fields of public relations.

(2) Representatives of organizations with offices that focus on communications and distribute messages through major media news outlets and social media.

(3) To the maximum extent practicable, individuals with experience communicating financial results and business strategy for purposes of shaping a confident brand image.

(4) To the maximum extent practicable, individuals with experience with consumer and lifestyle imaging and creating publicity for a particular product or service.

(5) To the maximum extent practicable, veterans who have experience in press and public relations.

(c) DUTIES.—The advisory committee shall advise the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs—

(1) to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs is strategically and effectively—

(A) engaging the public and Department stakeholders to increase awareness nationally regarding all benefits and services furnished by the Department;

(B) explaining new or changing policies of the Department;

(C) improving the image and reputation of the Department; and

(D) coordinating and collaborating with national community-based organizations, nonprofits, and State and local government agencies;

(2) to assist the Secretary in conducting such other press or public relations activities relating to outreach activities of the Department as the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs consider appropriate; and

(3) to ensure coordination and collaboration on efforts within the Department for the development, implementation, and review of local outreach with respect to benefits that include the following:

(A) Compensation and pension benefits.

(B) Insurance benefits.

(C) Burial and memorial benefits.

(D) Education benefits.

(E) Vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits.

(F) Readjustment counseling benefits.

(G) Loan guarantee benefits.

(H) Such other benefits as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(d) LOCATION OF MEETINGS.—Each meeting of the advisory committee shall take place at a location that is property of the Department and shall, to the maximum extent practicable, use teleconference technology.

(e) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall consult with and seek the advice of the advisory committee not less frequently than quarterly on matters relating to the duties of the advisory committee under subsection (c).

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not less frequently than once every 90 days for the first year and semiannually thereafter, the advisory committee shall submit to Congress and to the Secretary a report on outreach activities of the Department.

(2) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include such recommendations for legislative and administrative action as the advisory committee considers appropriate to improve the press and public relations of the Department relating to outreach.

(g) TERMINATION.—The advisory committee shall terminate on October 1, 2015, and the requirements and authorities under this section shall terminate on such date.

(h) OUTREACH DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''outreach'' has the meaning given the term in section 6301 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 704. ADVISORY BOARDS ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RELATING TO HEALTH CARE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For each entity described in paragraph (2), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, acting through the director of that entity, establish not later than 180 days after the effective date specified in subsection (h) an advisory board at that entity on matters relating to outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs at that entity.

(2) ENTITY DESCRIBED.—An entity described in this paragraph is—

(A) a healthcare system of the Department; or

(B) a Veterans Integrated System Network, if such Veterans Integrated System Network does not contain a healthcare system.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) shall be, to the maximum extent practicable, composed of individuals selected by the Secretary from among the following:

(A) Individuals who are eminent in their respective fields of public relations.

(B) Representatives of organizations with offices that focus on communications and distribute messages through major media news outlets and social media.

(C) Individuals with experience communicating financial results and business strategy for purposes of shaping a confident brand image.

(D) Individuals with experience with consumer and lifestyle imaging and creating publicity for a particular product or service.

(E) Employees of the Department who are involved in press and public relations strategy for an entity described in subsection (a)(2).

(F) To the maximum extent practicable, veterans who have experience in press and public relations.

(2) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of an individual selected under paragraph (1) shall be at the election of the individual.

(c) DUTIES.—Each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) at an entity described in subsection (a)(2) shall advise the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs—

(1) to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs is strategically and effectively—

(A) engaging the public and Department stakeholders to increase awareness nationally regarding benefits and services furnished by the Department;

(B) explaining new or changing policies of the Department;

(C) improving the image and reputation of the Department;

(D) coordinating and collaborating with national community-based organizations, nonprofits, and State and local government agencies; and

(E) coordinating and collaborating on efforts within the Department for the development, implementation, and review of local outreach with respect to benefits that include—

(i) compensation and pension benefits;

(ii) insurance benefits;

(iii) burial and memorial benefits;

(iv) education benefits;

(v) vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits;

(vi) readjustment counseling benefits;

(vii) loan guarantee benefits; and

(viii) such other benefits as the Secretary considers appropriate; and

(2) to assist the director of that entity in conducting such other press or public relations activities relating to outreach activities of the Department as that advisory board considers appropriate.

(d) MEETING LOCATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If teleconference technology is not used, meetings of each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) shall be held at a location that is property of the Department.

(2) TELECONFERENCE TECHNOLOGY.—Each advisory board shall use, to the maximum extent practicable, teleconference technology.

(e) CONSULTATION.—Each director of an entity described in subsection (a)(2) shall consult with and seek the advice of the advisory board established at such entity not less frequently than once every two months on matters relating to the duties of the advisory board under subsection (c).

(f) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not less frequently than each year, each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) shall submit to the Secretary a report with such information as may be beneficial to the Secretary in preparing the reports required by section 6308 of title 38, United States Code.

(g) TERMINATION.—Each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) and the authorities and requirements of this section shall terminate three years after the effective date specified in subsection (h).

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 705. MODIFICATION OF REQUIREMENT FOR PERIODIC REPORTS TO CONGRESS ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 6308 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking ''even-numbered''; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking ''biennial'';

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''for legislative and administrative action'' after ''Recommendations''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) Recommendations that such administrative actions as may be taken—

''(A) to maximize resources for outreach activities of the Department; and

''(B) to focus outreach efforts on activities that are proven to be more effective.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The heading for section 6308 is amended by striking ''**Biennial**'' and inserting ''**Annual**''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 is amended by striking the item relating to section 6308 and inserting the following new item:

''6308. Annual report to Congress.''.

SEC. 706. BUDGET TRANSPARENCY FOR OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 is amended by inserting after section 6308 the following new section:

''§ 6309. Budget transparency

''(a) BUDGET REQUIREMENTS.—In the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the Department budget for a fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall include a separate statement of the amount requested for such fiscal year for activities of the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs as follows:

''(1) For outreach activities of the Department in aggregate.

''(2) For outreach activities of each element of the Department specified in subsection (b)(1).

''(b) PROCEDURES FOR EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION.—(1) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, the Secretary shall establish

and maintain procedures for the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs to ensure the effective coordination and collaboration of outreach activities of the Department between and among the following:

''(A) Office of the Secretary.

''(B) Veterans Health Administration.

''(C) Veterans Benefits Administration.

''(D) National Cemetery Administration.

''(2) The Secretary shall—

''(A) beginning after the date on which the Secretary establishes procedures under paragraph (1), not less frequently than once every two years conduct a review of the procedures established and maintained under paragraph (1) to ensure that such procedures meet the requirements of such paragraph;

''(B) make such modifications to such procedures as the Secretary considers appropriate based upon reviews conducted under subparagraph (A) in order to better meet such requirements; and

''(C) not later than 45 days after completing a review under subparagraph (A), submit to Congress a report on the findings of such review.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 6308 the following new item:

''6309. Budget transparency.''.

TITLE VIII—ENHANCEMENT OF RIGHTS UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT

SEC. 801. MODIFICATION OF PERIOD DETERMINING WHICH ACTIONS ARE COVERED UNDER STAY OF PROCEEDINGS AND ADJUSTMENT OF OBLIGATION PROTECTIONS CONCERNING MORTGAGES AND TRUST DEEDS OF MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 303(b) of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 533(b)) is amended by striking ''filed'' and inserting ''pending''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 710(d) of the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 (Public Law 112–154; 126 Stat. 1208) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraph (1):

''(1) SUNSET AND REVIVAL.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Subsections (b) and (c) of section 303 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 533), as amended by subsections (a) and (b) of this section, are amended by striking 'within one year' each place it appears and inserting 'within 90 days'.

''(B) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subparagraph (A) shall take effect on January 1, 2015.''; and

(2) by striking paragraph (3).

SEC. 802. PROTECTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES REGARDING PROFESSIONAL LICENSES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title VII of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 701 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''SEC. 707. PROFESSIONAL LICENSES.

''(a) EXPIRATION DURING PERIOD IN WHICH SERVICEMEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR HOSTILE FIRE OR IMMINENT DANGER SPECIAL PAY.—If a license issued by a State or local licensing authority to a servicemember would otherwise expire during a period in which such servicemember is eligible for hostile fire or imminent danger special pay under section 310 of title 37, United States Code, such State or local licensing authority shall delay the expiration of such license until not earlier than the date that is 180 days after the date on which such period of eligibility ends.

''(b) CONTINUING EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS DURING PERIOD IN WHICH SERVICEMEMBERS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR HOSTILE FIRE OR IMMINENT DANGER SPECIAL PAY.—If a State or local licensing authority otherwise requires a servicemember to meet any continuing education requirements to maintain a license for a trade or profession during a period in which such servicemember is eligible for hostile fire or imminent danger special pay under section 310 of title 37, United States Code, such State or local licensing authority shall delay such continuing education requirement until not earlier than the date that is 180 days after the date on which such period of eligibility ends.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 1(b) of such Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501(b)) is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 706 the following new item:

''Sec. 707. Professional licenses and certifications.''.

SEC. 803. PROHIBITION ON DENIAL OF CREDIT BECAUSE OF ELIGIBILITY FOR PROTECTION.

Section 108 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 518) is amended—

(1) by striking ''Application by'' and inserting the following:

''(a) APPLICATION OR RECEIPT.—Application by''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(b) ELIGIBILITY.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—In addition to the protections under subsection (a), an individual who is entitled to any right or protection provided under this Act may not be denied or refused credit or be subject to any other action described under paragraphs (1) through (6) of subsection (a) solely by reason of such entitlement.

''(2) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prohibit a lender from considering all relevant factors, other than the entitlement of an individual to a right or protection provided under this Act, in making a determination as to whether it is appropriate to extend credit.''.

SEC. 804. INTEREST RATE LIMITATION ON DEBT ENTERED INTO DURING MILITARY SERVICE TO CONSOLIDATE OR REFINANCE STUDENT LOANS INCURRED BEFORE MILITARY SERVICE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 207 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 527) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''ON DEBT INCURRED BEFORE SERVICE'' after ''LIMITATION TO 6 PERCENT'';

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2) LIMITATION TO 6 PERCENT ON DEBT INCURRED DURING SERVICE TO CONSOLIDATE OR REFINANCE STUDENT LOANS INCURRED BEFORE SERVICE.—An obligation or liability bearing interest at a rate in excess of 6 percent per year that is incurred by a servicemember, or the servicemember and the servicemember's spouse jointly, during military service to consolidate or refinance one or more student loans incurred by the servicemember before such military service shall not bear an interest at a rate in excess of 6 percent during the period of military service.'';

(4) in paragraph (3), as redesignated by paragraph (2) of this subsection, by inserting ''or (2)'' after ''paragraph (1)''; and

(5) in paragraph (4), as so redesignated, by striking ''paragraph (2)'' and inserting ''paragraph (3)''.

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF LIMITATION.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking ''the interest rate limitation in subsection (a)'' and inserting ''an interest rate limitation in paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (a)''; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in the paragraph heading, by striking ''AS OF DATE OF ORDER TO ACTIVE DUTY''; and

(B) by inserting before the period at the end the following: ''in the case of an obligation or liability covered by subsection (a)(1), or as of the date the servicemember (or servicemember and spouse jointly) incurs the obligation or liability concerned under subsection (a)(2)''.

(c) STUDENT LOAN DEFINED.—Subsection (d) of such section is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) STUDENT LOAN.—The term 'student loan' means the following:

''(A) A Federal student loan made, insured, or guaranteed under title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1070 et seq.).

''(B) A private student loan as that term is defined in section 140(a) of the Truth in Lending Act (15 U.S.C. 1650(a)).''.

SEC. 805. TERMINATION OF RESIDENTIAL LEASES AFTER ASSIGNMENT OR RELOCATION TO QUARTERS OF UNITED STATES OR HOUSING FACILITY UNDER JURISDICTION OF UNIFORMED SERVICE.

(a) TERMINATION OF RESIDENTIAL LEASES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 305 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 535) is amended—

(A) in subsection (a)(1)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''or'' at the end;

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) in the case of a lease described in subsection (b)(1) and subparagraph (C) of such subsection, the date the lessee is assigned to or otherwise relocates to quarters or a housing facility as described in such subparagraph.''; and

(B) in subsection (b)(1)—

(i) in subparagraph (A), by striking ''or'' at the end;

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) the lease is executed by or on behalf of a person who thereafter and during the term of the lease is assigned to or otherwise relocates to quarters of the United States or a housing facility under the jurisdiction of a uniformed service (as defined in section 101 of title 37, United States Code), including housing provided under the Military Housing Privatization Initiative.''.

(2) MANNER OF TERMINATION.—Subsection (c)(1) of such section is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (A)—

(i) by inserting ''in the case of a lease described in subsection (b)(1) and subparagraph (A) or (B) of such subsection,'' before ''by delivery''; and

(ii) by striking ''and'' at the end;

(B) by redesignating subparagraph (B) as subparagraph (C); and

(C) by inserting after subparagraph (A) the following new subparagraph (B):

''(B) in the case of a lease described in subsection (b)(1) and subparagraph (C) of such subsection, by delivery by the lessee of written notice of such termination, and a letter from the servicemember's commanding officer indicating that the servicemember has been assigned to or is otherwise relocating to quarters of the United States or a housing facility under the jurisdiction of a uniformed service (as defined in section 101 of title 37, United States Code), to the lessor (or the lessor's grantee), or to the lessor's agent (or the agent's grantee); and''.

(b) DEFINITION OF MILITARY ORDERS AND CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES FOR PURPOSES OF ACT.—

(1) TRANSFER OF DEFINITIONS.—Such Act is further amended by transferring paragraphs (1) and (2) of section 305(i) (50 U.S.C. App. 535(i)) to the end of section 101 (50 U.S.C. App. 511) and redesignating such paragraphs, as so transferred, as paragraphs (10) and (11).

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Such Act is further amended—

(A) in section 305 (50 U.S.C. App. 535), as amended by paragraph (1), by striking subsection (i); and

(B) in section 705 (50 U.S.C. App. 595), by striking ''or naval'' both places it appears.

SEC. 806. PROTECTION OF SURVIVING SPOUSE WITH RESPECT TO MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title III of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 531 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 303 (50 U.S.C. App. 533) the following new section:

''SEC. 303A. PROTECTION OF SURVIVING SPOUSE WITH RESPECT TO MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE.

''(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (b), with respect to a servicemember who dies while in military service and who has a surviving spouse who is the servicemember's successor in interest to property covered under section 303(a), section 303 shall apply to the surviving spouse with respect to that property during the one-year period beginning on the date of such death in the same manner as if the servicemember had not died.

''(b) NOTICE REQUIRED.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—To be covered under this section with respect to property, a surviving spouse shall submit written notice that such surviving spouse is so covered to the mortgagee, trustee, or other creditor of the mortgage, trust deed, or other security in the nature of a mortgage with which the property is secured.

''(2) TIME.—Notice provided under paragraph (1) shall be provided with respect to a surviving spouse anytime during the one-year period beginning on the date of death of the servicemember with respect to whom the surviving spouse is to receive coverage under this section.

''(3) ADDRESS.—Notice provided under paragraph (1) with respect to property shall be provided via e-mail, facsimile, standard post, or express mail to facsimile numbers and addresses, as the case may be, designated by the servicer of the mortgage, trust deed, or other security in the nature of a mortgage with which the property is secured.

''(4) MANNER.—Notice provided under paragraph (1) shall be provided in writing by using a form designed under paragraph (5) or submitting a copy of a Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs document evidencing the military service-related death of a spouse while in military service.

''(5) OFFICIAL FORMS.—The Secretary of Defense shall design and distribute an official Department of Defense form that can be used by an individual to give notice under paragraph (1).''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 303A of such Act, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to deaths that occur on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents in section 1(b) of such Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501) is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 303 the following new item:

''Sec. 303A. Protection of surviving spouse with respect to mortgage foreclosure.''.

SEC. 807. IMPROVED PROTECTION OF MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES AGAINST DEFAULT JUDGMENTS.

(a) MODIFICATION OF PLAINTIFF AFFIDAVIT FILING REQUIREMENT.—Paragraph (1) of section 201(b) of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 521(b)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively, and indenting such clauses two ems to the right;

(2) in the matter before clause (i), as redesignated by paragraph (1), by striking ''In any'' and inserting the following:

''(A) IN GENERAL.—In any''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph (B):

''(B) DUE DILIGENCE.—Before filing the affidavit, the plaintiff shall conduct a diligent and reasonable investigation to determine whether or not the defendant is in military service, including a search of available records of the Department of Defense and any other information reasonably available to the plaintiff. The affidavit shall set forth all steps taken to determine the defendant's military status and shall have attached copies of the records on which the plaintiff relied in drafting the affidavit.''.

(b) APPOINTMENT OF ATTORNEY TO REPRESENT DEFENDANT IN MILITARY SERVICE.—Paragraph (2) of such section (50 U.S.C. App. 521(b)) is amended—

(1) by striking ''If in an action'' and inserting the following:

''(A) IN GENERAL.—If in an action'';

(2) in subparagraph (A), as designated by paragraph (1), by striking ''If an attorney'' and inserting the following:

''(C) LIMITATIONS ON APPOINTED ATTORNEY.—If an attorney'';

(3) by inserting after subparagraph (A), as designated by paragraph (1), the following new subparagraph:

''(B) DUE DILIGENCE.—If the court appoints an attorney to represent the defendant—

''(i) the attorney shall conduct a diligent and reasonable investigation to determine whether or not the defendant is in military service, including a search of available records of the Department of Defense and any other information reasonably available to the attorney; and

''(ii) the plaintiff shall submit to the attorney such information as the plaintiff may have concerning the whereabouts or identity of the defendant.''; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(D) TREATMENT OF ATTORNEYS FEES.—The reasonable fees of an attorney appointed to represent a servicemember shall be treated as costs of court for court cost purposes, unless the creditor seeks relief from such charges from the court.''.

SEC. 808. CLARIFICATION REGARDING APPLICATION OF ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY OF ATTORNEY GENERAL AND PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION UNDER SERVICEMEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT.

Sections 801 and 802 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 597 and 597a) shall apply as if such sections were included in the enactment of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 (54 Stat. 1178, chapter 888) and included in the restatement of such Act in Public Law 108–189.

SEC. 809. CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The heading for section 305 of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. App. 535) is amended by striking ''**RESIDENTIAL OR MOTOR VEHICLE LEASES**'' and inserting ''**LEASES OF PREMISES OCCUPIED AND MOTOR VEHICLES USED**''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents in section 1(b) of such Act (50 U.S.C. App. 501(b)) is amended by striking the item relating to section 305 and inserting the following new item:

''Sec. 305. Termination of leases of premises occupied and motor vehicles used.''.

TITLE IX—OTHER MATTERS

SEC. 901. REPEAL OF CERTAIN REDUCTIONS MADE BY BIPARTISAN BUDGET ACT OF 2013.

(a) ADJUSTMENT OF RETIREMENT PAY.—Section 403 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 (Public Law 113–76) is repealed as of the date of the enactment of such Act.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) APPLICABILITY TO DISABILITY AND SURVIVOR BENEFITS.—Title X of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2014 (division C of Public Law 113–76) is repealed.

(2) APPLICABILITY TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO JOINED AFTER JANUARY 1, 2014.—Section 2 of Public Law 113–82 is repealed.

SEC. 902. CONSIDERATION BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF RESOURCES DISPOSED OF FOR LESS THAN FAIR MARKET VALUE BY INDIVIDUALS APPLYING FOR PENSION.

(a) VETERANS.—Section 1522 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The Secretary''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) If a veteran otherwise eligible for payment of pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or the spouse of such veteran disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue the payment of pension to such veteran under section 1513 or 1521 of this title, as the case may be, for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the veteran or, if the veteran has a spouse, the corpus of the estates of the veteran and of the veteran's spouse, that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the veteran or spouse had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the veteran's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the veteran or, if the veteran has a spouse, the corpus of the estates of the veteran and of the veteran's spouse, that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the veteran's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the veteran applies for pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or, if later, the date on which the veteran (or the spouse of the veteran) disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this subparagraph shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of covered resources so

disposed of by the veteran (or the spouse of the veteran) on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the veteran's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of monthly pension that is payable to a veteran under section 1513 or 1521 of this title, including the maximum amount of increased pension payable under such sections on account of family members, but not including any amount of pension payable under such sections because a veteran is in need of regular aid and attendance or is permanently housebound,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The Secretary''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) If a veteran otherwise eligible for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child, the spouse of the veteran, or the child disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue payment of such increased pension for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the veteran, the spouse of the veteran, or the child had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the veteran applies for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child or, if later, the date on which the veteran, the spouse of the veteran, or the child disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this subparagraph shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the veteran, the spouse of the veteran, or the child on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the child's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of increased monthly pension that is payable to a veteran under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c)(1)(A) The Secretary shall not deny or discontinue payment of pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) of this section to the disposal of resources by an individual—

''(i) if—

''(I) a satisfactory showing is made to the Secretary (in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary) that all resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources; or

''(II) the Secretary determines, under procedures established by the Secretary in accordance with subparagraph (B), that the denial or discontinuance of payment would work an undue hardship; or

''(ii) to the extent that any portion of the resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources.

''(B) Undue hardship would be worked by the denial or discontinuance of payment for purposes of subparagraph (A)(i)(II) if the denial or discontinuance of payment would deprive the individual during the period of denial or discontinuance—

''(i) of medical care such that the individual's life or health would be endangered;

''(ii) of necessary food or clothing, or other necessities of life; or

''(iii) on such other basis as the Secretary shall specify in the procedures required by subparagraph (A)(i)(II).

''(C) If payment of pension or increased pension that would otherwise be denied or discontinued by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) is denied or discontinued only in part by reason of the return of resources as described in subparagraph (A)(ii), the period of the denial or discontinuance as determined pursuant to subparagraph (E) of subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2), as applicable, shall be recalculated to take into account such return of resources.

''(2) At the time a veteran applies for pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child, and at such other times as the Secretary considers appropriate, the Secretary shall—

''(A) inform such veteran of the provisions of subsections (a)(2) and (b)(2) providing for a period of ineligibility for payment of pension under such sections for individuals who make certain dispositions of resources for less than fair market value, including the exception for hardship from such period of ineligibility;

''(B) obtain from such veteran information which may be used in determining whether or not a period of ineligibility for such payments would be required by reason of such subsections; and

''(C) provide such veteran a timely process for determining whether or not the exception for hardship shall apply to such veteran.''.

(b) SURVIVING SPOUSES AND CHILDREN.—Section 1543 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3);

(B) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2)(A) If a surviving spouse otherwise eligible for payment of pension under section 1541 of this title disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue the payment of pension to such surviving spouse under section 1541 of this title for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the surviving spouse that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the surviving spouse had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the surviving spouse's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the surviving spouse that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the surviving spouse's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the surviving spouse applies for pension under section 1541 of this title or, if later, the date on which the surviving spouse disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this subparagraph shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the surviving spouse on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the surviving spouse's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of monthly pension that is payable to a surviving spouse under section 1541 of this title, including the maximum amount of increased pension payable under such section on account of a child, but not including any amount of pension payable under such section because a surviving spouse is in need of regular aid and attendance or is permanently housebound,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.'';

(C) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(4)(A) If a surviving spouse otherwise eligible for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child or the child disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue payment of such increased pension for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers that under all

the circumstances, if the surviving spouse or the child had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the surviving spouse applies for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child or, if later, the date on which the surviving spouse (or the child) disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this clause shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the surviving spouse (or the child) on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the child's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of increased monthly pension that is payable to a surviving spouse under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The Secretary''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) If a child otherwise eligible for payment of pension under section 1542 of this title or any person with whom such child is residing who is legally responsible for such child's support disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue the payment of pension to such child under section 1542 of this title for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the child or the corpus of the estate of any person with whom such child is residing who is legally responsible for such child's support that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the child or person had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate described in clause (i) that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the child applies for pension under section 1542 of this title or, if later, the date on which the child (or person described in subparagraph (B)) disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this clause is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this clause shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the child (or person described in subparagraph (B)) on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the child's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of monthly pension that is payable to a child under section 1542 of this title,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c)(1)(A) The Secretary shall not deny or discontinue payment of pension under section 1541 or 1542 of this title or payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2), (a)(4), or (b)(2) of this section to the disposal of resources by an individual—

''(i) if—

''(I) a satisfactory showing is made to the Secretary (in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary) that all resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources; or

''(II) the Secretary determines, under procedures established by the Secretary in accordance with subparagraph (B), that the denial or discontinuance of payment would work an undue hardship; or

''(ii) to the extent that any portion of the resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources.

''(B) Undue hardship would be worked by the denial or discontinuance of payment for purposes of subparagraph (A)(i)(II) if the denial or discontinuance of payment would deprive the individual during the period of denial or discontinuance—

''(i) of medical care such that the individual's life or health would be endangered;

''(ii) of necessary food or clothing, or other necessities of life; or

''(iii) on such other basis as the Secretary shall specify in the procedures required by subparagraph (A)(i)(II).

''(C) If payment of pension or increased pension that would otherwise be denied or discontinued by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2), (a)(4), or (b)(2) is denied or discontinued only in part by reason of the return of resources as described in subparagraph (A)(ii), the period of the denial or discontinuance as determined pursuant to subparagraph (E) of subsection (a)(2), (a)(4), or (b)(2), as applicable, shall be recalculated to take into account such return of resources.

''(2) At the time a surviving spouse or child applies for pension under section 1541 or 1542 of this title or increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child, and at such other times as the Secretary considers appropriate, the Secretary shall—

''(A) inform such surviving spouse or child of the provisions of subsections (a)(2), (a)(4), and (b)(2), as applicable, providing for a period of ineligibility for payment of pension or increased pension under such sections for individuals who make certain dispositions of resources for less than fair market value, including the exception for hardship from such period of ineligibility;

''(B) obtain from such surviving spouse or child information which may be used in determining whether or not a period of ineligibility for such payments would be required by reason of such subsections; and

''(C) provide such surviving spouse or child a timely process for determining whether or not the exception for hardship shall apply to such surviving spouse or child.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsections (a)(2), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1522 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and subsections (a)(2), (a)(4), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1543 of such title, as added by subsection (b), shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to payments of pension and increased pension applied for after such date and to payments of pension and increased pension for which eligibility is redetermined after such date, except that no reduction in pension shall be made under such subsections because of any disposal of covered resources made before such date.

(d) ANNUAL REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 months after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less frequently than once each year thereafter through 2018, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the administration of subsections (a)(2), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1522 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and subsections (a)(2), (a)(4), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1543 of such title, as added by subsection (b), during the most recent 12-month period.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following, for the period covered by the report:

(A) The number of individuals who applied for pension under chapter 15 of such title.

(B) The number of individuals who received pension under such chapter.

(C) The number of individuals with respect to whom the Secretary denied or discontinued payment of pension under the subsections referred to in paragraph (1).

(D) A description of any trends identified by the Secretary regarding pension payments that have occurred as a result of the amendments made by this section.

(E) Such other information as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Select Committee on Aging of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 903. EXTENSION OF REDUCED PENSION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS COVERED BY MEDICAID PLANS FOR SERVICES FURNISHED BY NURSING FACILITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (d)(7) of section 5503 is amended by striking ''November 30, 2016'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The section heading of such section is amended to read as follows: ''**Reduced pension for certain hospitalized veterans and certain veterans receiving domiciliary, nursing home, or nursing facility care**''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 55 is amended by striking the item relating to section 5503 and inserting the following new item:

''5503. Reduced pension for certain hospitalized veterans and certain veterans receiving domiciliary, nursing home, or nursing facility care.''.

SEC. 904. CONDITIONS ON AWARD OF PER DIEM PAYMENTS BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR PROVISION OF HOUSING OR SERVICES TO HOMELESS VETERANS.

(a) CONDITION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 2012(c)(1) is amended by striking ''unless the facilities'' and all that follows through ''may specify.'' and inserting the following: ''unless the Secretary certifies the following:

''(A) That the building where the grant recipient or eligible entity provides housing or services for which the grant recipient or eligible entity would receive such payment is in compliance with the codes relevant to the operations and level of care provided, including applicable provisions of the most recently published version of the Life Safety Code of the National Fire Protection Association or such other comparable fire and safety requirements as the Secretary may specify.

''(B) That such building and such housing or services are in compliance with licensing requirements, fire and safety requirements, and any other requirements in the jurisdiction in which the building is located regarding the condition of the building and the provision of such housing or services.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to an application for a per diem payment under section 2012 of title 38, United States Code, submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) ANNUAL INSPECTIONS REQUIRED.—Section 2012 is amended by striking subsection (b) and inserting the following new subsection (b):

''(b)(1) Not less frequently than once each fiscal year, the Secretary shall inspect each facility of each grant recipient or entity eligible for payments under subsection (a) at which the recipients and entities provide services under section 2011 of this title or this section.

''(2) Except as provided in paragraph (1), inspections made under such paragraph shall be made at such times as the Secretary considers necessary.

''(3) An inspection of a facility of a recipient or entity described in paragraph (1) made under such paragraph may be made with or without prior notice to the recipient or entity, as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(4) No per diem payment may be provided to a grant recipient or eligible entity under this section unless the facilities of the grant recipient or eligible entity meet such standards as the Secretary shall prescribe.''.

(c) REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION AUTHORIZED.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respectively;

(2) in paragraph (1), as amended by subsection (a)(1), by striking ''in paragraph (2)'' and inserting ''in paragraph (4)''; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2) The Secretary may revoke any certification made under paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines that such certification is no longer accurate.''.

(d) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION OF TERMINATION OF PER DIEM REQUIRED.—Such subsection is further amended by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph (3):

''(3) Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary terminates provision of per diem payment under this section to a grant recipient or an eligible entity, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives notice of such termination if such termination were made because a facility of the grant recipient or eligible entity did not comply with—

''(A) an applicable provision of the most recently published version of the Life Safety Code of the National Fire Protection Association or such other comparable fire and safety requirement as the Secretary has specified; or

''(B) a licensing requirement, fire or safety requirement, or another requirement in the jurisdiction in which the facility is located regarding the condition of the facility.''.

(e) TREATMENT OF CURRENT RECIPIENTS OF PER DIEM PAYMENTS.—

(1) ASSESSMENT.—In the case of the recipient of a per diem payment under section 2012 of title 38, United States Code, that receives such a payment during the year in which this Act is enacted for the provision of housing or services, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall assess whether the building where such housing or services are provided is and whether the housing and services are in compliance as required by section 2012(c)(1) of such title, as amended by subsection (a)(1).

(2) FAILURE TO COMPLY.—In the case described in paragraph (1), if the Secretary does not certify the compliance of the building and the housing or services under such section before the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary may not make any additional per diem payments to the recipient for the provision of such housing or services under section 2012 of such title until the Secretary certifies that such building is and such housing or services are in compliance.

(f) CONFORMING CONDITION ON AWARD OF GRANTS BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE PROGRAMS.—Section 2011(b)(5)(A) is amended by inserting '', including housing and building codes,''.

SEC. 905. EXCEPTION TO CERTAIN RECAPTURE REQUIREMENTS AND TREATMENT OF CONTRACTS AND GRANTS WITH STATE HOMES WITH RESPECT TO CARE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS.

(a) EXCEPTION TO CERTAIN RECAPTURE REQUIREMENTS.—Section 8136(b) is amended by inserting '', or the provision of services or conduct of a program pursuant to a contract or grant issued or awarded by the Secretary under subchapter II of chapter 20 or section 2031(a)(2) of this title,'' after ''outpatient clinic''.

(b) CONSTRUCTION.—The amendment made by subsection (a) may not be construed to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into a contract with a State home or award a grant to a State home for the furnishing of residential care for a veteran without—

(1) identifying a substantial need for such care; and

(2) determining that the State home is the most appropriate provider of such care.

SEC. 906. EXTENDED PERIOD FOR SCHEDULING OF MEDICAL EXAMS FOR VETERANS RECEIVING TEMPORARY DISABILITY RATINGS FOR SEVERE MENTAL DISORDERS.

Section 1156(a)(3) is amended by striking ''six months'' and inserting ''18 months''.

SEC. 907. AUTHORITY TO ISSUE VETERANS ID CARDS.

(a) AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may issue a card to a veteran that identifies the veteran as a veteran and includes a photo of the veteran and the name of the veteran.

(2) NO REQUIREMENT FOR ENROLLMENT OR RECEIPT OF BENEFITS.—The Secretary may issue a card under paragraph (1) to a veteran, whether or not such veteran is—

(A) enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code; or

(B) in receipt of educational assistance, compensation, or pension under laws administered by the Secretary.

(3) DESIGNATION.—A card issued under paragraph (1) may be known as a ''Veterans ID Card''.

(b) RECOGNITION OF VETERANS ID CARDS FOR REDUCED PRICING OF PHARMACEUTICALS, CONSUMER PRODUCTS, AND SERVICES.—The Secretary may work with national retail chains that offer reduced prices on pharmaceuticals, consumer products, and services to veterans to ensure that such retail chains recognize cards issued under subsection (a)(1) for purposes of offering reduced prices on pharmaceuticals, consumer products, and services.

(c) VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''veteran'' has the meaning given the term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 908. HONORING AS VETERANS CERTAIN PERSONS WHO PERFORMED SERVICE IN THE RESERVE COMPONENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

Any person who is entitled under chapter 1223 of title 10, United States Code, to retired pay for nonregular service or, but for age, would be entitled under such chapter to retired pay for nonregular service shall be honored as a veteran but shall not be entitled to any benefit by reason of this honor.

SEC. 909. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION FROM SECRETARY OF TREASURY AND COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY FOR INCOME VERIFICATION PURPOSES.

Section 5317(g) is amended by striking ''September 30, 2016'' and inserting ''September 30, 2018''.

SEC. 910. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO ISSUE AND GUARANTEE CERTAIN LOANS.

Section 3729(b)(2) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) in clause (iii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (iv), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023'';

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023'';

(3) in subparagraph (C)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(4) in subparagraph (D)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''.

SEC. 911. REVIEW OF DETERMINATION OF CERTAIN SERVICE IN PHILIPPINES DURING WORLD WAR II.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and such military historians as the Secretary of Defense recommends, shall review the process used to determine whether a covered individual served in support of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II in accordance with section 1002(d) of title X of Division A of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–5; 38 U.S.C. 107 note) for purposes of determining whether such covered individual is eligible for payments described in such section.

(b) COVERED INDIVIDUALS.—In this section, a covered individual is any individual who timely submitted a claim for benefits under subsection (c) of section 1002 of title X of Division A of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–5; 38 U.S.C. 107 note) based on service as described in subsection (d) of that section.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report detailing any findings, actions taken, or recommendations for legislative action with respect to the review conducted under subsection (a).

(d) PROHIBITION ON BENEFITS FOR DISQUALIFYING CONDUCT UNDER NEW PROCESS PURSUANT TO REVIEW.—If pursuant to the review conducted under subsection (a) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines to establish a new process for the making of payments as described in that subsection, the process shall include mechanisms to ensure that individuals are not treated as covered individuals for purposes of such payments if such individuals engaged in any disqualifying conduct during service described in that subsection, including collaboration with the enemy or criminal conduct.

SEC. 912. REVIEW OF DETERMINATION OF CERTAIN SERVICE OF MERCHANT MARINERS DURING WORLD WAR II.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security and such military historians as the Secretary of Defense recommends, shall review the process used to determine whether an individual performed service under honorable conditions that satisfies the requirements of a coastwise merchant seaman who is recognized pursuant to section 401 of the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 (Public Law 95–202; 38 U.S.C. 106 note) as having performed active duty service .

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report detailing any findings, actions taken, or recommendations for legislative action with respect to the review conducted under subsection (a).

SEC. 913. REPORT ON LAOTIAN MILITARY SUPPORT OF ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES DURING VIETNAM WAR.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and such agencies and individuals as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs considers appropriate, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on—

(1) the extent to which Laotian military forces provided combat support to the Armed Forces of the United States between February 28, 1961, and May 15, 1975;

(2) whether the current classification by the Civilian/Military Service Review Board of the Department of Defense of service by individuals of Hmong ethnicity is appropriate; and

(3) any recommendations for legislative action.

(b) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 914. REPORT ON PRACTICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO ADEQUATELY PROVIDE SERVICES TO VETERANS WITH HEARING LOSS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the actions taken by the Secretary to implement the findings and recommendations included in the 2006 report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies entitled ''Noise and Military Service: Implications for Hearing Loss and Tinnitus'' that was prepared pursuant to section 104 of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–330; 116 Stat. 2822).

(b) EFFECT OF DUTY MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY NOISE EXPOSURE LISTING ON RECEIPT OF BENEFITS BY VETERANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall include in the report required by subsection (a) an evaluation of the extent to which veterans who had a military occupational specialty during service as a member of the Armed Forces that is not included on the Duty Military Occupational Specialty Noise Exposure Listing (in this subsection referred to as the ''MOS List'') are precluded from receiving benefits related to hearing loss from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) DATA.—The Secretary shall include in the evaluation required by paragraph (1) the following:

(A) With respect to veterans who had a military occupational specialty included on the MOS List—

(i) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department of Veterans Affairs that were granted; and

(ii) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department that were denied.

(B) With respect to veterans who had a military occupational specialty not included on the MOS List—

(i) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department that were granted;

(ii) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department that were denied;

(iii) of the number of denied claims under clause (ii), the number of those claims that were appealed; and

(iv) of the number of appealed claims under clause (iii), the number of those appealed claims that were successfully appealed.

(c) ADDITIONAL MATTERS.—The Secretary shall include in the report required by subsection (a) the following:

(1) In the case of a veteran with unilateral hearing loss, an explanation of the scientific basis for the practice of the Department of determining a disability rating level with respect to hearing based on an examination of that veteran's healthy ear instead of the injured ear.

(2) An analysis of the reduction in earning capacity for veterans as a result of unilateral hearing loss, with a focus on the ability of those veterans—

(A) to detect the direction of sound; and

(B) to understand speech.

(3) An explanation of the rationale for the practice of the Department of not issuing a compensable rating for hearing loss at certain levels that are severe enough to require the use of hearing aids.

(4) A survey of the audiologists that conduct compensation and pension examinations for the Department to assess the implementation of the most recent edition of the best practices manual for hearing loss and tinnitus examinations that includes the following:

(A) A description of the training received by those audiologists compared to the methods described in the most recent edition of the best practices manual for hearing loss and tinnitus examinations.

(B) An assessment of how those audiologists have complied with that training.

(C) Whether those audiologists are using a range of tones up to 8000 hertz to test the hearing of veterans.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize or require the Secretary to defer, delay, or replace the ongoing efforts of the Secretary to update the schedule of ratings required by section 1155 of title 38, United States Code.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 915. REPORT ON JOINT PROGRAMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WITH RESPECT TO HEARING LOSS OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, submit to Congress a report that identifies the following:

(1) Goals for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense for the prevention, early detection, and treatment of hearing loss by the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Hearing Center of Excellence of the Department of Defense.

(2) Resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs that could be made available to assist the Department of Defense in conducting audiometric tests and tinnitus screenings for members of the Armed Forces.

(3) Barriers to information being added to the Hearing Loss and Auditory System Injury Registry required under section 721(c)(1) of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4506).

(4) Recommendations for any legislative or administrative actions necessary with respect to the Hearing Loss and Auditory System Injury Registry—

(A) to assist in achieving the goals specified in paragraph (1);

(B) to improve the adjudication of claims for benefits with respect to hearing loss; and

(C) to further the research objectives of the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory

Research of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Hearing Center of Excellence of the Department of Defense.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 916. LIMITATION ON AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF BONUSES PAYABLE TO PERSONNEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DURING FISCAL YEAR 2014.

The aggregate amount of bonuses and awards payable to personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs under chapter 45 or 53 of title 5, United States Code, or any other provision of such title, during fiscal year 2014 may not exceed $368,000,000.

SEC. 917. AMENDMENT TO OCO ADJUSTMENTS.

Section 251 of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 (2 U.S.C. 901) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking paragraph (2) and inserting the following:

''(2) ELIMINATING A BREACH.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Each non-exempt account within a category shall be reduced by a dollar amount calculated by multiplying the enacted level of sequestrable budgetary resources in that account at that time by the uniform percentage necessary to eliminate a breach within that category.

''(B) OVERSEAS CONTINGENCIES.—Any amount of budget authority designated as for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism for any of fiscal years 2018 through 2021 in excess of the levels set in subsection (b)(2)(E) shall be counted in determining whether a breach has occurred in the revised security category during the fiscal year.''; and

(2) in subsection (b)(2)—

(A) in subparagraph (A)(ii), by inserting ''for fiscal years 2012 through 2017,'' before ''the Congress''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

''(E) OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS/GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM.—If, for fiscal years 2018 through 2021, appropriations for discretionary accounts are enacted that Congress designates for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism in statute on an account by account basis and the President subsequently so designates, the adjustment for the fiscal year shall be the total of such appropriations for the fiscal year in discretionary accounts designated as being for Overseas Contingency Operations/Global War on Terrorism, but not to exceed—

''(i) for fiscal year 2018, $94,740,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

''(ii) for fiscal year 2019, $96,807,000,000 in additional new budget authority;

''(iii) for fiscal year 2020, $98,983,000,000 in additional new budget authority; and

''(iv) for fiscal year 2021, $101,167,000,000 in additional new budget authority.''.

SA 2748. Mr. RUBIO submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 367, after line 14, add the following:

SEC. 918. REMOVAL OF SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR PERFORMANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 7 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 713. Senior Executive Service: removal based on performance

''(a) IN GENERAL.—(1) Notwithstanding subchapter V of chapter 35 of title 5, subchapter V of chapter 75 of title 5, or any other provision of law, the Secretary may remove any individual who is an employee of the Department from a Senior Executive Service position (as defined in section 3132(a) of title 5) if the Secretary determines the performance of the individual warrants such removal.

''(2) If the Secretary so removes such an individual, the Secretary may—

''(A) remove the individual from the civil service (as defined in section 2101 of title 5); or

''(B) appoint the individual to a General Schedule position at any grade of the General Schedule the Secretary determines appropriate.

''(b) NOTICE TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 30 days after removing an individual from the Senior Executive Service under subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives notice in writing of such removal and the reason for such removal.

''(c) MANNER OF REMOVAL.—A removal under this section shall be done in the same manner as the removal of a professional staff member employed by a Member of Congress.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by adding at the end the following new item:

''713. Senior Executive Service: removal based on performance.''.

SA 2749. Mrs. GILLIBRAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 367, after line 14, add the following:

SEC. 918. CLARIFICATION OF PRESUMPTIONS OF EXPOSURE FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN VICINITY OF REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM.

(a) COMPENSATION.—Subsections (a)(1) and (f) of section 1116 are amended by inserting ''(including the territorial seas of such Republic)'' after ''served in the Republic of Vietnam'' each place it appears.

(b) HEALTH CARE.—Section 1710(e)(4) is amended by inserting ''(including the territorial seas of such Republic)'' after ''served on active duty in the Republic of Vietnam''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsections (a) and (b) shall take effect as of September 25, 1985.

SA 2750. Mrs. GILLIBRAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of title IX, add the following:

SEC. 918. REVIEW OF OPERATION OF CERTAIN SHIPS DURING THE VIETNAM ERA.

(a) REVIEW REQUIRED.—By not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Defense shall review the logs of each ship under the authority of the Secretary of the Navy that is known to have operated in the waters near Vietnam during the Vietnam Era (as that term is defined in section 101(29) of title 38, United States Code) to determine—

(1) whether each such ship operated in the territorial waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975; and

(2) for each such ship that so operated—

(A) the date or dates when the ship so operated; and

(B) the distance from the shore of the location where the ship operated that was the closest proximity to shore.

(b) PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Upon a determination that any such ship so operated, the Secretary of Defense shall provide such determination, together with the information described in subsection (a)(2) about the ship, to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(c) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make publicly available all unclassified information provided to the Secretary under subsection (b).

SA 2751. Mrs. GILLIBRAND submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end, add the following:

TITLE X—MILITARY JUSTICE MATTERS

SEC. 1001. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''Military Justice Improvement Act of 2014''.

SEC. 1002. MODIFICATION OF AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE TO PROCEED TO TRIAL BY COURT-MARTIAL ON CHARGES ON CERTAIN OFFENSES WITH AUTHORIZED MAXIMUM SENTENCE OF CONFINEMENT OF MORE THAN ONE YEAR.

(a) MODIFICATION OF AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—

(A) MILITARY DEPARTMENTS.—With respect to charges under chapter 47 of title 10, United States Code (the Uniform Code of Military Justice), that allege an offense specified in paragraph (2) and not excluded under paragraph (3), the Secretary of Defense shall require the Secretaries of the military departments to provide for the determination under section 830(b) of such chapter (article 30(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice) on whether to try such charges by court-martial as provided in paragraph (4).

(B) HOMELAND SECURITY.—With respect to charges under chapter 47 of title 10, United States Code (the Uniform Code of Military Justice), that allege an offense specified in paragraph (2) and not excluded under paragraph (3) against a member of the Coast Guard (when it is not operating as a service in the Navy), the Secretary of Homeland Security shall provide for the determination under section 830(b) of such chapter (article 30(b) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice) on whether to try such charges by court-martial as provided in paragraph (4).

(2) COVERED OFFENSES.—An offense specified in this paragraph is an offense as follows:

(A) An offense under chapter 47 of title 10, United States Code (the Uniform Code of Military Justice), that is triable by court-martial under that chapter for which the maximum punishment authorized under that chapter includes confinement for more than one year.

(B) A conspiracy to commit an offense specified in subparagraph (A) as punishable under section 881 of title 10, United States Code (article 81 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(C) A solicitation to commit an offense specified in subparagraph (A) as punishable under section 882 of title 10, United States Code (article 82 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(D) An attempt to commit an offense specified in subparagraphs (A) through (C) as punishable under section 880 of title 10, United

States Code (article 80 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(3) EXCLUDED OFFENSES.—Paragraph (1) does not apply to an offense as follows:

(A) An offense under sections 883 through 917 of title 10, United States Code (articles 83 through 117 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(B) An offense under section 933 or 934 of title 10, United States Code (articles 133 and 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(C) A conspiracy to commit an offense specified in subparagraph (A) or (B) as punishable under section 881 of title 10, United States Code (article 81 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(D) A solicitation to commit an offense specified in subparagraph (A) or (B) as punishable under section 882 of title 10, United States Code (article 82 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(E) An attempt to commit an offense specified in subparagraph (A) through (D) as punishable under section 880 of title 10, United States Code (article 80 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(4) REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS.—The disposition of charges pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be subject to the following:

(A) The determination whether to try such charges by court-martial shall be made by a commissioned officer of the Armed Forces designated in accordance with regulations prescribed for purposes of this subsection from among commissioned officers of the Armed Forces in grade O–6 or higher who—

(i) are available for detail as trial counsel under section 827 of title 10, United States Code (article 27 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice);

(ii) have significant experience in trials by general or special court-martial; and

(iii) are outside the chain of command of the member subject to such charges.

(B) Upon a determination under subparagraph (A) to try such charges by court-martial, the officer making that determination shall determine whether to try such charges by a general court-martial convened under section 822 of title 10, United States Code (article 22 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), or a special court-martial convened under section 823 of title 10, United States Code (article 23 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(C) A determination under subparagraph (A) to try charges by court-martial shall include a determination to try all known offenses, including lesser included offenses.

(D) The determination to try such charges by court-martial under subparagraph (A), and by type of court-martial under subparagraph (B), shall be binding on any applicable convening authority for a trial by court-martial on such charges.

(E) The actions of an officer described in subparagraph (A) in determining under that subparagraph whether or not to try charges by court-martial shall be free of unlawful or unauthorized influence or coercion.

(F) The determination under subparagraph (A) not to proceed to trial of such charges by general or special court-martial shall not operate to terminate or otherwise alter the authority of commanding officers to refer such charges for trial by summary court-martial convened under section 824 of title 10, United States Code (article 24 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), or to impose non-judicial punishment in connection with the conduct covered by such charges as authorized by section 815 of title 10, United States Code (article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice).

(5) CONSTRUCTION WITH CHARGES ON OTHER OFFENSES.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to alter or affect the disposition of charges under chapter 47 of title 10, United States Code (the Uniform Code of Military Justice), that allege an offense triable by court-martial under that chapter for which the maximum punishment authorized under that chapter includes confinement for one year or less.

(6) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries of the military departments and the Secretary of Homeland Security (with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy) shall revise policies and procedures as necessary to comply with this subsection.

(B) UNIFORMITY.—The General Counsel of the Department of Defense and the General Counsel of the Department of Homeland Security shall jointly review the policies and procedures revised under this paragraph in order to ensure that any lack of uniformity in policies and procedures, as so revised, among the military departments and the Department of Homeland Security does not render unconstitutional any policy or procedure, as so revised.

(7) MANUAL FOR COURTS-MARTIAL.—The Secretary of Defense shall recommend such changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial as are necessary to ensure compliance with this subsection.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE AND APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (a), and the revisions required by that subsection, shall take effect on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and shall apply with respect to charges preferred under section 830 of title 10, United States Code (article 30 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), on or after such effective date.

SEC. 1003. MODIFICATION OF OFFICERS AUTHORIZED TO CONVENE GENERAL AND SPECIAL COURTS-MARTIAL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (a) of section 822 of title 10, United States Code (article 22 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (8) and (9) as paragraphs (9) and (10), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (7) the following new paragraph (8):

''(8) the officers in the offices established pursuant to section 1003(c) of the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2014 or officers in the grade of O–6 or higher who are assigned such responsibility by the Chief of Staff of the Army, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, or the Commandant of the Coast Guard, but only with respect to offenses to which section 1002(a)(1) of the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2014 applies;''.

(b) NO EXERCISE BY OFFICERS IN CHAIN OF COMMAND OF ACCUSED OR VICTIM.—Such section (article) is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) An officer specified in subsection (a)(8) may not convene a court-martial under this section if the officer is in the chain of command of the accused or the victim.''.

(c) OFFICES OF CHIEFS OF STAFF ON COURTS-MARTIAL.—

(1) OFFICES REQUIRED.—Each Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces or Commandant specified in paragraph (8) of section 822(a) of title 10, United States Code (article 22(a) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), as amended by subsection (a), shall establish an office to do the following:

(A) To convene general and special courts-martial under sections 822 and 823 of title 10, United States Code (articles 22 and 23 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), pursuant to paragraph (8) of section 822(a) of title 10, United States Code (article 22(a) of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), as so amended, with respect to offenses to which section 1002(a)(1) applies.

(B) To detail under section 825 of title 10, United States Code (article 25 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice), members of courts-martial convened as described in subparagraph (A).

(2) PERSONNEL.—The personnel of each office established under paragraph (1) shall consist of such members of the Armed Forces and civilian personnel of the Department of Defense, or such members of the Coast Guard or civilian personnel of the Department of Homeland Security, as may be detailed or assigned to the office by the Chief of Staff or Commandant concerned. The members and personnel so detailed or assigned, as the case may be, shall be detailed or assigned from personnel billets in existence on the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 1004. DISCHARGE USING OTHERWISE AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries of the military departments and the Secretary of Homeland Security (with respect to the Coast Guard when it is not operating as a service in the Navy) shall carry out sections 1002 and 1003 (and the amendments made by section 1003) using personnel, funds, and resources otherwise authorized by law.

(b) NO AUTHORIZATION OF ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL OR RESOURCES.—Sections 1002 and 1003 (and the amendments made by section 1003) shall not be construed as authorizations for personnel, personnel billets, or funds for the discharge of the requirements in such sections.

SEC. 1005. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF MODIFICATION OF AUTHORITIES ON COURTS-MARTIAL BY INDEPENDENT PANEL ON REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT OF PROCEEDINGS UNDER THE UNIFORM CODE OF MILITARY JUSTICE.

Section 576(d)(2) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 (Public Law 112–239; 126 Stat. 1762) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subparagraph (J) as subparagraph (K); and

(2) by inserting after subparagraph (I) the following new subparagraph (J):

''(J) Monitor and assess the implementation and efficacy of sections 1002 through 1004 of the Military Justice Improvement Act of 2014, and the amendments made by such sections.''.

SA 2752. Mr. BURR (for himself, Mr. MCCONNELL, and Mr. INHOFE) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the ''Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014''.

(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
Sec. 2. References to title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—SURVIVOR AND DEPENDENT MATTERS

Sec. 101. Extension of initial period for increased dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses with children.
Sec. 102. Eligibility for dependency and indemnity compensation, educational assistance, and housing loans for surviving spouses who remarry after age 55.

Sec. 103. Extension of marriage delimiting date for surviving spouses of Persian Gulf War veterans to qualify for death pension.
Sec. 104. Making effective date provision consistent with provision for benefits eligibility of a veteran's child based upon termination of remarriage by annulment.
Sec. 105. Expansion of Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship.
Sec. 106. Expansion of Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program.
Sec. 107. Benefits for children of certain Thailand service veterans born with spina bifida.
Sec. 108. Program on assisted living for children of Vietnam veterans and certain Korea service veterans born with spina bifida.
Sec. 109. Program on grief counseling in retreat settings for surviving spouses of members of the Armed Forces who die while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces.
Sec. 110. Program evaluation on survivors' and dependents' educational assistance authorities.

TITLE II—EDUCATION MATTERS

Sec. 201. Approval of courses of education provided by public institutions of higher learning for purposes of All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program and Post-9/11 Educational Assistance conditional on in-State tuition rate for veterans.
Sec. 202. Extension and expansion of authority for certain qualifying work-study activities for purposes of the educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 203. Prohibitions relating to references to GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill.
Sec. 204. Review of utilization of educational assistance to pursue programs of training on the job and participating employers.
Sec. 205. Report on debt management and collection.
Sec. 206. Restoration of prior reporting fee multipliers.

TITLE III—HEALTH CARE MATTERS

Subtitle A—Expansion and Improvements of Benefits Generally

Sec. 301. Improved access to appropriate immunizations for veterans.
Sec. 302. Expansion of provision of chiropractic care and services to veterans.
Sec. 303. Modification of commencement date of period of service at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for eligibility for hospital care and medical services in connection with exposure to contaminated water.
Sec. 304. Expansion of emergency treatment reimbursement for certain veterans.
Sec. 305. Extension of sunset date regarding transportation of individuals to and from facilities of Department of Veterans Affairs and requirement of report.
Sec. 306. Extension and modification of pilot program on assisted living services for veterans with traumatic brain injury.
Sec. 307. Program on health promotion for overweight and obese veterans through support of fitness center memberships.
Sec. 308. Program on health promotion for veterans through establishment of Department of Veterans Affairs fitness facilities.

Subtitle B—Health Care Administration

Sec. 311. Extension of Department of Veterans Affairs Health Professional Scholarship Program.
Sec. 312. Expansion of availability of prosthetic and orthotic care for veterans.
Sec. 313. Limitation on expansion of dialysis pilot program.
Sec. 314. Requirement for Department of Veterans Affairs policy on reporting cases of infectious diseases at facilities of the Department.
Sec. 315. Independent assessment of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks and medical centers of Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 316. Requirements in connection with next update of current strategic plan for Office of Rural Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 317. Report on provision of telemedicine services.
Sec. 318. Report on expansion of patient enrollment.
Sec. 319. Report on expansion of program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers.
Sec. 320. Designation of Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Subtitle C—Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Sec. 321. Expansion of research and education on and delivery of complementary and alternative medicine to veterans.
Sec. 322. Program on integration of complementary and alternative medicine within Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers.
Sec. 323. Studies of barriers encountered by veterans in receiving, and administrators and clinicians in providing, complementary and alternative medicine services furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 324. Program on use of wellness programs as complementary approach to mental health care for veterans and family members of veterans.

Subtitle D—Mental Health Care

Sec. 331. Inclusion of mental health professionals in the education and training program for health personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Sec. 332. Report on provision of mental health services for families of certain veterans at facilities of the Department.
Sec. 333. Annual report on community mental health partnership pilot program.

Subtitle E—Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement

Sec. 341. Restorative dental services for veterans.
Sec. 342. Pilot program on expansion of furnishing of dental care to all enrolled veterans.
Sec. 343. Program on education to promote dental health in veterans.
Sec. 344. Information on dental services for inclusion in electronic medical records under dental insurance pilot program.
Sec. 345. Authorization of appropriations.

Subtitle F—Health Care Related to Sexual Trauma

Sec. 351. Expansion of eligibility for sexual trauma counseling and treatment to veterans on inactive duty training.
Sec. 352. Provision of counseling and treatment for sexual trauma by the Department of Veterans Affairs to members of the Armed Forces.
Sec. 353. Department of Veterans Affairs screening mechanism to detect incidents of domestic abuse.
Sec. 354. Reports on military sexual trauma and domestic abuse.

Subtitle G—Adoption Assistance, Child Care Assistance, and Counseling

Sec. 361. Adoption assistance for severely wounded veterans.
Sec. 362. Coordination between Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense on furnishing of fertility counseling and treatment.
Sec. 363. Program on assistance for child care for certain veterans.
Sec. 364. Counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces.

Subtitle H—Major Medical Facility Leases

Sec. 371. Authorization of major medical facility leases.
Sec. 372. Budgetary treatment of Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facilities leases.

TITLE IV—EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED MATTERS

Subtitle A—Training and Other Services for Veterans Seeking Employment

Sec. 401. Extension of authority of Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide rehabilitation and vocational benefits to members of Armed Forces with severe injuries or illnesses.
Sec. 402. Consolidated and coordinated Federal Government Internet portal to connect current and former members of the Armed Forces with employers seeking employees with skills and experience developed through military service.

Subtitle B—Employment of Veterans and Recognition of Veteran Status With Respect to Employment Related Matters

Sec. 411. Employment of veterans with the Federal Government.
Sec. 412. State recognition of military experience of veterans in issuing licenses and credentials to veterans.
Sec. 413. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor in the awarding of Federal contracts.
Sec. 414. Report on discrimination against members of reserve components of Armed Forces and veterans in civilian labor market.

Subtitle C—Improving Employment and Reemployment Rights of Members of the Uniformed Services

Sec. 421. Suspension, termination, or debarment of contractors for repeated violations of employment or reemployment rights of members of uniformed services.

Subtitle D—Small Business Matters

Sec. 431. Expansion of contracting goals and preferences of Department of Veterans Affairs to include conditionally owned small business concerns 100 percent owned by veterans.

Sec. 432. Modification of treatment under contracting goals and preferences of Department of Veterans Affairs for small businesses owned by veterans of small businesses after death of disabled veteran owners.

Sec. 433. Treatment of businesses after deaths of servicemember-owners for purposes of Department of Veterans Affairs contracting goals and preferences.

Sec. 434. Special rule for treatment under contracting goals and preferences of Department of Veterans Affairs of small business concerns licensed in community property States.

Sec. 435. Report on assistance for veterans in obtaining training on purchasing and operating a franchise.

TITLE V—ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS

Sec. 501. Administration of Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

Sec. 502. Regional support centers for Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

Sec. 503. Commission on Capital Planning for Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facilities.

Sec. 504. Advance appropriations for certain accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 505. Public access to Department of Veterans Affairs research and data sharing between Departments.

Sec. 506. Assessment by Comptroller General of the United States of information made available by Veterans Benefits Administration.

Sec. 507. Comptroller general report on advisory committees of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE VI—IMPROVEMENT OF PROCESSING OF CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION

Subtitle A—Claims Based on Military Sexual Trauma

Sec. 601. Medical examination and opinion for disability compensation claims based on military sexual trauma.

Sec. 602. Case representative officers for military sexual trauma support.

Sec. 603. Report on standard of proof for service-connection of mental health conditions related to military sexual trauma.

Sec. 604. Reports on claims for disabilities incurred or aggravated by military sexual trauma.

Subtitle B—Claims for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

Sec. 611. Program on treatment of certain applications for dependency and indemnity compensation as fully developed claims.

Sec. 612. Report by Secretary of Veterans Affairs on improving timeliness and accuracy of administration of claims for dependency and indemnity compensation and pension for surviving spouses and children.

Subtitle C—Agency of Original Jurisdiction

Sec. 621. Working group to improve employee work credit and work management systems of Veterans Benefits Administration in an electronic environment.

Sec. 622. Task force on retention and training of Department of Veterans Affairs claims processors and adjudicators.

Sec. 623. Reports on requests by the Department of Veterans Affairs for records of other Federal agencies.

Sec. 624. Recognition of representatives of Indian tribes in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 625. Program on participation of local and tribal governments in improving quality of claims for disability compensation submitted to Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 626. Department of Veterans Affairs notice of average times for processing compensation claims.

Sec. 627. Quarterly reports on progress of Department of Veterans Affairs in eliminating backlog of claims for compensation that have not been adjudicated.

Sec. 628. Reports on use of existing authorities to expedite benefits decisions.

Sec. 629. Reports on Department disability medical examinations and prevention of unnecessary medical examinations.

Subtitle D—Board of Veterans' Appeals and Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

Sec. 631. Treatment of certain misfiled documents as a notice of appeal to the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

Sec. 632. Determination of manner of appearance for hearings before Board of Veterans' Appeals.

TITLE VII—OUTREACH MATTERS

Sec. 701. Program to increase coordination of outreach efforts between the Department of Veterans Affairs and Federal, State, and local agencies and nonprofit organizations.

Sec. 702. Cooperative agreements between Secretary of Veterans Affairs and States on outreach activities.

Sec. 703. Advisory committee on outreach activities of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 704. Advisory boards on outreach activities of Department of Veterans Affairs relating to health care.

Sec. 705. Modification of requirement for periodic reports to Congress on outreach activities of Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sec. 706. Budget transparency for outreach activities of Department of Veterans Affairs.

TITLE VIII—OTHER VETERANS MATTERS

Sec. 801. Repeal of certain reductions made by Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013.

Sec. 802. Consideration by Secretary of Veterans Affairs of resources disposed of for less than fair market value by individuals applying for pension.

Sec. 803. Extension of reduced pension for certain veterans covered by medicaid plans for services furnished by nursing facilities.

Sec. 804. Conditions on award of per diem payments by Secretary of Veterans Affairs for provision of housing or services to homeless veterans.

Sec. 805. Exception to certain recapture requirements and treatment of contracts and grants with State homes with respect to care for homeless veterans.

Sec. 806. Extended period for scheduling of medical exams for veterans receiving temporary disability ratings for severe mental disorders.

Sec. 807. Authority to issue Veterans ID Cards.

Sec. 808. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

Sec. 809. Extension of authority for Secretary of Veterans Affairs to obtain information from Secretary of Treasury and Commissioner of Social Security for income verification purposes.

Sec. 810. Extension of authority for Secretary of Veterans Affairs to issue and guarantee certain loans.

Sec. 811. Review of determination of certain service in Philippines during World War II.

Sec. 812. Review of determination of certain service of merchant mariners during World War II.

Sec. 813. Report on Laotian military support of Armed Forces of the United States during Vietnam War.

Sec. 814. Report on practices of the Department of Veterans Affairs to adequately provide services to veterans with hearing loss.

Sec. 815. Report on joint programs of Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense with respect to hearing loss of members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

Sec. 816. Limitation on aggregate amount of bonuses payable to personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs during fiscal year 2014.

Sec. 817. Designation of American World War II Cities.

TITLE IX—IRAN SANCTIONS

Sec. 901. Short title.

Sec. 902. Sense of Congress on nuclear weapon capabilities of Iran.

Subtitle A—Expansion and Imposition of Sanctions

Sec. 911. Applicability of sanctions with respect to petroleum transactions.

Sec. 912. Ineligibility for exception to certain sanctions for countries that do not reduce purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin to a de minimis level.

Sec. 913. Imposition of sanctions with respect to ports, special economic zones, and strategic sectors of Iran.

Sec. 914. Identification of, and imposition of sanctions with respect to, certain Iranian individuals.

Sec. 915. Imposition of sanctions with respect to transactions in foreign currencies with or for certain sanctioned persons.

Sec. 916. Sense of Congress on prospective sanctions.

Subtitle B—Enforcement of Sanctions
Sec. 921. Sense of Congress on the provision of specialized financial messaging services to the Central Bank of Iran and other sanctioned Iranian financial institutions.
Sec. 922. Inclusion of transfers of goods, services, and technologies to strategic sectors of Iran for purposes of identifying Destinations of Diversion Concern.
Sec. 923. Authorization of additional measures with respect to Destinations of Diversion Concern.
Sec. 924. Sense of Congress on increased staffing for agencies involved in the implementation and enforcement of sanctions against Iran.
Subtitle C—Implementation of Sanctions
Sec. 931. Suspension of sanctions to facilitate a diplomatic solution.
Subtitle D—General Provisions
Sec. 941. Exception for Afghanistan reconstruction.
Sec. 942. Exception for import restrictions.
Sec. 943. Applicability to certain intelligence activities.
Sec. 944. Applicability to certain natural gas projects.
Sec. 945. Rule of construction with respect to the use of force against Iran.

SEC. 2. REFERENCES TO TITLE 38, UNITED STATES CODE.

Except as otherwise expressly provided, whenever in this Act an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 38, United States Code.

TITLE I—SURVIVOR AND DEPENDENT MATTERS

SEC. 101. EXTENSION OF INITIAL PERIOD FOR INCREASED DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WITH CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1311(f)(2) is amended by striking ''two-year'' and inserting ''three-year''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect as of September 30, 2014, and shall apply to any surviving spouse who was eligible for or in receipt of benefits under section 1311(f) of title 38, United States Code, on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 102. ELIGIBILITY FOR DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION, EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, AND HOUSING LOANS FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES WHO REMARRY AFTER AGE 55.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (2)(B) of section 103(d) is amended to read as follows:

''(B) The remarriage after age 55 of the surviving spouse of a veteran shall not bar the furnishing of benefits specified in paragraph (5) to such person as the surviving spouse of the veteran.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Paragraph (5) of such section is amended by striking ''Paragraphs (2)(A)'' and inserting ''Paragraphs (2)''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 103. EXTENSION OF MARRIAGE DELIMITING DATE FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS TO QUALIFY FOR DEATH PENSION.

Section 1541(f)(1)(E) is amended by striking ''January 1, 2001'' and inserting ''the date that is 10 years and one day after the date on which the Persian Gulf War was terminated, as prescribed by Presidential proclamation or by law''.

SEC. 104. MAKING EFFECTIVE DATE PROVISION CONSISTENT WITH PROVISION FOR BENEFITS ELIGIBILITY OF A VETERAN'S CHILD BASED UPON TERMINATION OF REMARRIAGE BY ANNULMENT.

Section 5110(l) is amended by striking '', or of an award or increase of benefits based on recognition of a child upon termination of the child's marriage by death or divorce,''.

SEC. 105. EXPANSION OF MARINE GUNNERY SERGEANT JOHN DAVID FRY SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) EXPANSION OF ENTITLEMENT.—Subsection (b)(9) of section 3311 is amended by inserting ''or spouse'' after ''child''.

(b) LIMITATION AND ELECTION ON CERTAIN BENEFITS.—Subsection (f) of such section is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (4); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraphs:

''(2) LIMITATION.—The entitlement of an individual to assistance under subsection (a) pursuant to paragraph (9) of subsection (b) because the individual was a spouse of a person described in such paragraph shall expire on the earlier of—

''(A) the date that is 15 years after the date on which the person died; and

''(B) the date on which the individual remarries.

''(3) ELECTION ON RECEIPT OF CERTAIN BENEFITS.—A surviving spouse entitled to assistance under subsection (a) pursuant to paragraph (9) of subsection (b) who is also entitled to educational assistance under chapter 35 of this title may not receive assistance under both this section and such chapter, but shall make an irrevocable election (in such form and manner as the Secretary may prescribe) under which section or chapter to receive educational assistance.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 3321(b)(4) is amended—

(1) by striking ''an individual'' and inserting ''a child''; and

(2) by striking ''such individual's'' each time it appears and inserting ''such child's''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 106. EXPANSION OF YELLOW RIBBON G.I. EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3317(a) is amended by striking ''in paragraphs (1) and (2)'' and inserting ''in paragraphs (1), (2), and (9)''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to academic terms beginning after July 1, 2015.

SEC. 107. BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN OF CERTAIN THAILAND SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 18 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1822. Benefits for children of certain Thailand service veterans born with spina bifida

''(a) BENEFITS AUTHORIZED.—The Secretary may provide to any child of a veteran of covered service in Thailand who is suffering from spina bifida the health care, vocational training and rehabilitation, and monetary allowance required to be paid to a child of a Vietnam veteran who is suffering from spina bifida under subchapter I of this chapter as if such child of a veteran of covered service in Thailand were a child of a Vietnam veteran who is suffering from spina bifida under such subchapter.

''(b) SPINA BIFIDA CONDITIONS COVERED.—This section applies with respect to all forms and manifestations of spina bifida, except spina bifida occulta.

''(c) VETERAN OF COVERED SERVICE IN THAILAND.—For purposes of this section, a veteran of covered service in Thailand is any individual, without regard to the characterization of that individual's service, who—

''(1) served in the active military, naval, or air service in Thailand, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975; and

''(2) is determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to have been exposed to a herbicide agent during such service in Thailand.

''(d) HERBICIDE AGENT.—For purposes of this section, the term 'herbicide agent' means a chemical in a herbicide used in support of United States and allied military operations in Thailand, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, during the period beginning on January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT TO DEFINITION OF ''CHILD''.—Section 1831(1) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) by striking ''subchapter III of this chapter'' and inserting ''section 1821 of this title''; and

(B) in clause (i), by striking ''section 1821 of this title'' and inserting ''that section''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(C) For purposes of section 1822 of this title, an individual, regardless of age or marital status, who—

''(i) is the natural child of a veteran of covered service in Thailand (as determined for purposes of that section); and

''(ii) was conceived after the date on which that veteran first entered service described in subsection (c) of that section.''.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SUBCHAPTER HEADING.—The heading for subchapter III of chapter 18 is amended by inserting ''AND THAILAND'' after ''KOREA''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 18 is amended—

(A) by striking the item relating to subchapter III and inserting the following new item:

''SUBCHAPTER III—CHILDREN OF CERTAIN KOREA AND THAILAND SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA'';

and

(B) by inserting after the item relating to section 1821 the following new item:

''1822. Benefits for children of certain Thailand service veterans born with spina bifida.''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 108. PROGRAM ON ASSISTED LIVING FOR CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS AND CERTAIN KOREA SERVICE VETERANS BORN WITH SPINA BIFIDA.

(a) PROGRAM.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing assisted living, group home care, or similar services in lieu of nursing home care to covered individuals.

(b) COVERED INDIVIDUALS.—For purposes of this section, a covered individual is any individual who is entitled to health care under subchapter I or III of chapter 18 of title 38, United States Code.

(c) DURATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(2) CONTINUATION.—Subject to paragraph (3), the Secretary may continue the program for an additional two-year period as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(3) TERMINATION.—The program may not operate after the date that is five years after the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) SCOPE OF SERVICES AND PROGRAM.—Under the program, the Secretary shall provide covered individuals with integrated, comprehensive services, including the following:

(1) Assisted living, group home care, or such other similar services as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) Transportation services.

(3) Such other services as the Secretary considers appropriate for the care of covered individuals under the program.

(e) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—In carrying out the program, the Secretary shall—

(1) inform all covered individuals of the services available under the program;

(2) enter into agreements with appropriate providers of assisted living, group home care, or other similar services for provision of services under the program; and

(3) determine the appropriate number of covered individuals to be enrolled in the program and criteria for such enrollment.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) PRELIMINARY REPORTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of the program and, if the program is continued under subsection (c)(2), not later than three years after the date of the commencement of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) A description of the implementation and operation of the program.

(ii) The number of covered individuals receiving benefits under the program.

(iii) An analysis that compares the costs of furnishing assisted living, group home care, or similar services with the costs of furnishing nursing home care.

(iv) An analysis of the costs and benefits under the program.

(v) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(vi) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary may have.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(ii) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary may have.

(g) FUNDING.—Amounts to carry out the program shall be derived from amounts appropriated or otherwise made available for the furnishing of nursing home care under chapter 18 of title 38, United States Code.

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 109. PROGRAM ON GRIEF COUNSELING IN RETREAT SETTINGS FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO DIE WHILE SERVING ON ACTIVE DUTY IN THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out, through the Readjustment Counseling Service of the Veterans Health Administration, a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of providing grief counseling services described in subsection (b) in group retreat settings to surviving spouses of members of the Armed Forces who die while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces who would, as determined by the Readjustment Counseling Service, benefit from the services provided under the program.

(2) PARTICIPATION AT ELECTION OF SURVIVING SPOUSE.—The participation of a surviving spouse in the program under this section shall be at the election of the surviving spouse.

(b) COVERED SERVICES.—The services provided to a surviving spouse under the program shall include the following:

(1) Information and counseling on coping with grief.

(2) Information about benefits and services available to surviving spouses under laws administered by the Secretary.

(3) Such other information and counseling as the Secretary considers appropriate to assist a surviving spouse under the program with adjusting to the death of a spouse.

(c) EVENTS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program at not fewer than six events as follows:

(1) Three events at which surviving spouses with dependent children are encouraged to bring their children.

(2) Three events at which surviving spouses with dependent children are not encouraged to bring their children.

(d) DURATION.—The program shall be carried out during the two-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the first year of the program and not later than 180 days after the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the program.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall contain the findings and conclusions of the Secretary as a result of the program, and shall include such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the terms ''active duty'', ''Armed Forces'', and ''surviving spouse'' have the meanings given such terms in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(g) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 110. PROGRAM EVALUATION ON SURVIVORS' AND DEPENDENTS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE AUTHORITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall enter into a contract with an appropriate private sector entity to conduct a program evaluation of the authorities for survivors' and dependents' educational assistance under chapter 35 of title 38, United States Code.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than six months after the entry into the contract required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the results of the program evaluation conducted pursuant to the contract, together with such comments on the results of the program evaluation as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE II—EDUCATION MATTERS

SEC. 201. APPROVAL OF COURSES OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING FOR PURPOSES OF ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND POST-9/11 EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE CONDITIONAL ON IN-STATE TUITION RATE FOR VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 3679 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter and subject to paragraphs (3) through (6), the Secretary shall disapprove a course of education provided by a public institution of higher learning to a covered individual pursuing a course of education with educational assistance under chapter 30 or 33 of this title while living in the State in which the public institution of higher learning is located if the institution charges tuition and fees for that course for the covered individual at a rate that is higher than the rate the institution charges for tuition and fees for that course for residents of the State in which the institution is located, regardless of the covered individual's State of residence.

''(2) For purposes of this subsection, a covered individual is any individual as follows:

''(A) A veteran who was discharged or released from a period of not fewer than 90 days of service in the active military, naval, or air service less than three years before the date of enrollment in the course concerned.

''(B) An individual who is entitled to assistance under section 3311(b)(9) or 3319 of this title by virtue of such individual's relationship to a veteran described in subparagraph (A).

''(3) If after enrollment in a course of education that is subject to disapproval under paragraph (1) by reason of paragraph (2)(A) or (2)(B) a covered individual pursues one or more courses of education at the same public institution of higher learning while remaining continuously enrolled (other than during regularly scheduled breaks between courses, semesters or terms) at that institution of higher learning, any course so pursued by the covered individual at that institution of higher learning while so continuously enrolled shall also be subject to disapproval under paragraph (1).

''(4) It shall not be grounds to disapprove a course of education under paragraph (1) if a public institution of higher learning requires a covered individual pursuing a course of education at the institution to demonstrate an intent, by means other than satisfying a physical presence requirement, to establish residency in the State in which the institution is located, or to satisfy other requirements not relating to the establishment of residency, in order to be charged tuition and fees for that course at a rate that is equal to or less than the rate the institution charges for tuition and fees for that course for residents of the State.

''(5) The Secretary may waive such requirements of paragraph (1) as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(6) Disapproval under paragraph (1) shall apply only with respect to educational assistance under chapters 30 and 33 of this title.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (c) of section 3679 of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a) of this section), shall apply with respect to educational assistance provided for pursuit of programs of education during academic terms that begin after July 1, 2015, through courses of education that commence on or after that date.

SEC. 202. EXTENSION AND EXPANSION OF AUTHORITY FOR CERTAIN QUALIFYING WORK-STUDY ACTIVITIES FOR PURPOSES OF THE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) EXTENSION OF EXPIRING CURRENT AUTHORITY.—Section 3485(a)(4) is amended by striking ''June 30, 2013'' each place it appears and inserting ''June 30, 2015''.

(b) EXPANSION TO OUTREACH SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(K) During the period beginning on June 30, 2013, and ending on June 30, 2015, the following activities carried out at the offices of Members of Congress for such Members:

''(i) The distribution of information to members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their dependents about the benefits and services under laws administered by the Secretary and other appropriate governmental and nongovernmental programs.

''(ii) The preparation and processing of papers and other documents, including documents to assist in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.''.

(c) ANNUAL REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than June 30 of 2014 and 2015, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the work-study allowances paid under paragraph (1) of section 3485(a) of title 38, United States Code, during the most recent one-year period for qualifying work-study activities described in paragraph (4) of such section, as amended by subsections (a) and (b) of this section.

(2) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include, for the year covered by such report, the following:

(A) A description of the recipients of such work-study allowances.

(B) A list of the locations where qualifying work-study activities were carried out.

(C) A description of the outreach conducted by the Secretary to increase awareness of the eligibility of such work-study activities for such work-study allowances.

SEC. 203. PROHIBITIONS RELATING TO REFERENCES TO GI BILL AND POST-9/11 GI BILL.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 36 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3697B. Prohibition relating to references to GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill

''(a) PROHIBITION.—(1) No person may, except with the written permission of the Secretary, use the words and phrases covered by this subsection in connection with any promotion, goods, services, or commercial activity in a manner that reasonably and falsely suggests that such use is approved, endorsed, or authorized by the Department or any component thereof.

''(2) For purposes of this subsection, the words and phrases covered by this subsection are as follows:

''(A) 'GI Bill'.

''(B) 'Post-9/11 GI Bill'.

''(3) A determination that a use of one or more words and phrases covered by this subsection in connection with a promotion, goods, services, or commercial activity is not a violation of this subsection may not be made solely on the ground that such promotion, goods, services, or commercial activity includes a disclaimer of affiliation with the Department or any component thereof.

''(b) ENFORCEMENT BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—(1) When any person is engaged or is about to engage in an act or practice which constitutes or will constitute conduct prohibited by subsection (a), the Attorney General may initiate a civil proceeding in a district court of the United States to enjoin such act or practice.

''(2) Such court may, at any time before final determination, enter such restraining orders or prohibitions, or take such other action as is warranted, to prevent injury to the United States or to any person or class of persons for whose protection the action is brought.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 36 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3697A the following new item:

''3697B. Prohibition relating to references to GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill.''.

SEC. 204. REVIEW OF UTILIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO PURSUE PROGRAMS OF TRAINING ON THE JOB AND PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall commence a review of—

(1) the utilization of educational assistance under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pursue programs of training on the job (other than programs of apprenticeship); and

(2) the availability of such programs to individuals seeking to pursue such programs with such educational assistance.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date on which the Secretary commences the review required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on such review.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The extent of utilization as described in paragraph (1) of subsection (a).

(B) An assessment of the availability of programs as described in paragraph (2) of such subsection.

(C) A description of any barriers the Secretary has identified to greater utilization of educational assistance for pursuit of a program of training on the job or availability of such programs.

(D) Such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary may have to increase or decrease such utilization or availability.

(E) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

SEC. 205. REPORT ON DEBT MANAGEMENT AND COLLECTION.

(a) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on processes used by the Department of Veterans Affairs to identify and resolve cases of incorrect payments associated with educational assistance under chapters 30 and 33 of title 38, United States Code.

(b) ISSUES ADDRESSED.—The report required by subsection (a) shall, to the extent possible, address the following:

(1) The effectiveness of the processes referred to in subsection (a) in identifying and resolving incorrect payments associated with educational assistance under chapters 30 and 33 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) The accuracy of overpayment information provided to veterans by the Education Service and Debt Management Center of the Department.

(3) How well the Debt Management Center of the Department communicates and works with veterans to resolve disputed debt amounts.

(4) How the payment and debt collection processes of the Department compare to comparable programs in other Federal agencies.

(5) Any recommendations to improve the payment and debt collection processes of the Department that the Comptroller General considers appropriate.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 206. RESTORATION OF PRIOR REPORTING FEE MULTIPLIERS.

Section 3684(c) is amended—

(1) by striking ''$12'' and inserting ''$7''; and

(2) by striking ''$15'' and inserting ''$11''.

TITLE III—HEALTH CARE MATTERS

Subtitle A—Expansion and Improvements of Benefits Generally

SEC. 301. IMPROVED ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE IMMUNIZATIONS FOR VETERANS.

(a) INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS AS MEDICAL SERVICES.—

(1) COVERED BENEFIT.—Subparagraph (F) of section 1701(9) is amended to read as follows:

''(F) immunizations against infectious diseases, including each immunization on the recommended adult immunization schedule at the time such immunization is indicated on that schedule;''.

(2) RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE DEFINED.—Section 1701 is amended by adding after paragraph (9) the following new paragraph:

''(10) The term 'recommended adult immunization schedule' means the schedule established (and periodically reviewed and, as appropriate, revised) by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices established by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and delegated to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.''.

(b) INCLUSION OF RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATIONS IN ANNUAL REPORT.—Section 1704(1)(A) is amended—

(1) in clause (i), by striking ''and'' at the end;

(2) in clause (ii), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(3) by inserting after clause (ii) the following new clause:

''(iii) to provide veterans each immunization on the recommended adult immunization schedule at the time such immunization is indicated on that schedule.''.

(c) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the development and implementation by the Department of Veterans Affairs of quality measures and metrics, including targets for compliance, to ensure that veterans receiving medical services under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code, receive each immunization on the recommended adult immunization schedule at the time such immunization is indicated on that schedule.

(2) RECOMMENDED ADULT IMMUNIZATION SCHEDULE DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''recommended adult immunization schedule'' has the meaning given that term in section 1701(10) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)(2).

(3) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This subsection shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 302. EXPANSION OF PROVISION OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE AND SERVICES TO VETERANS.

(a) PROGRAM FOR PROVISION OF CHIROPRACTIC CARE AND SERVICES TO VETERANS.—Section 204(c) of the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Programs Enhancement Act of 2001 (Public Law 107–135; 115 Stat. 2459; 38 U.S.C. 1710 note) is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The program''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2) The program shall be carried out at not fewer than two medical centers or clinics in each Veterans Integrated Service Network by not later than one year after the effective date specified in section 302(c) of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, and at not fewer than 50 percent of all medical centers in each Veterans Integrated Service Network by not later than two years after such effective date.''.

(b) EXPANDED CHIROPRACTOR SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VETERANS.—

(1) MEDICAL SERVICES.—Paragraph (6) of section 1701 is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(H) Chiropractic services.''.

(2) REHABILITATIVE SERVICES.—Paragraph (8) of such section is amended by inserting ''chiropractic,'' after ''counseling,''.

(3) PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICES.—Paragraph (9) of such section is amended—

(A) by redesignating subparagraphs (F) through (K) as subparagraphs (G) through (L), respectively; and

(B) by inserting after subparagraph (E) the following new subparagraph (F):

''(F) periodic and preventive chiropractic examinations and services;''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section and the amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 303. MODIFICATION OF COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PERIOD OF SERVICE AT CAMP LEJEUNE, NORTH CAROLINA, FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR HOSPITAL CARE AND MEDICAL SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH EXPOSURE TO CONTAMINATED WATER.

(a) MODIFICATION.—Section 1710(e)(1)(F) is amended by striking ''January 1, 1957,'' and inserting ''August 1, 1953 (or such earlier date for the commencement of exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune as the Secretary, in consultation with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, shall specify),''.

(b) PUBLICATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall publish in the Federal Register a notice of any earlier date for the commencement of exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for purposes of section 1710(e)(1)(F) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a).

SEC. 304. EXPANSION OF EMERGENCY TREATMENT REIMBURSEMENT FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1725(b)(2)(B) is amended—

(1) by inserting ''(i)'' after ''(B)'';

(2) by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(ii) the veteran was unable to receive care under this chapter within such 24-month period because of a waiting period imposed by the Department with respect to a new patient examination of such veteran.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 305. EXTENSION OF SUNSET DATE REGARDING TRANSPORTATION OF INDIVIDUALS TO AND FROM FACILITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REQUIREMENT OF REPORT.

(a) EXTENSION OF SUNSET DATE.—Subsection (a)(2) of section 111A is amended by striking ''December 31, 2014'' and inserting ''September 30, 2015''.

(b) FUNDING AVAILABLE.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c) FUNDING.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated for each of fiscal years 2014 and 2015 for the Department, $4,000,000 to carry out this section.''.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on—

(1) the efforts of the Secretary to carry out the transportation services required by section 111A(a) of title 38, United States Code;

(2) the utilization of those services by covered veterans; and

(3) the feasibility and advisability of the continuation of the provision of such services after September 30, 2015.

SEC. 306. EXTENSION AND MODIFICATION OF PILOT PROGRAM ON ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES FOR VETERANS WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY.

(a) EXTENSION OF PROGRAM.—Subsection (a) of section 1705 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110–181; 38 U.S.C. 1710C note) is amended by striking ''a five-year'' and inserting ''an eight-year''.

(b) MODIFICATION OF LOCATIONS.—Subsection (b) of such section is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3); and

(2) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following new paragraphs:

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The pilot program shall be carried out at locations selected by the Secretary for purposes of the pilot program.

''(2) LOCATED IN SAME REGION AS POLYTRAUMA CENTERS.—Of the locations selected under paragraph (1), at least one location shall be in each health care region of the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs that contains a polytrauma center of the Department of Veterans Affairs.''.

(c) MODIFICATION OF REPORT REQUIREMENTS.—Subsection (e) of such section is amended to read as follows:

''(e) REPORTS.—

''(1) ANNUAL REPORT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, and not later than September 30 each year thereafter until 2018, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

''(B) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

''(i) The number of individuals that participated in the pilot program during the year preceding the submission of the report.

''(ii) The number of individuals that successfully completed the pilot program during the year preceding the submission of the report.

''(iii) The degree to which pilot program participants and family members of pilot program participants were satisfied with the pilot program.

''(iv) The interim findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the success of the pilot program and recommendations for improvement.

''(2) FINAL REPORT.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the completion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a final report on the pilot program.

''(B) ELEMENTS.—The final report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

''(i) A description of the pilot program.

''(ii) An assessment of the utility of the activities under the pilot program in enhancing the rehabilitation, quality of life, and community reintegration of veterans with traumatic brain injury, including complex mild traumatic brain injury.

''(iii) Such recommendations as the Secretary considers appropriate regarding improving the pilot program.''.

(d) MODIFICATION OF DEFINITIONS.—

(1) COMMUNITY-BASED BRAIN INJURY RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATIVE CARE SERVICES.—Such section is further amended—

(A) in the section heading, by striking ''**ASSISTED LIVING**''and inserting ''**COMMUNITY-BASED BRAIN INJURY RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATIVE CARE**'';

(B) in subsection (c), in the subsection heading, by striking ''ASSISTED LIVING'' and inserting ''COMMUNITY-BASED BRAIN INJURY RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATIVE CARE'';

(C) by striking ''assisted living'' each place it appears, and inserting ''community-based brain injury rehabilitative care''; and

(D) in subsection (f)(1), by striking ''and personal care'' and inserting ''rehabilitation, and personal care''.

(2) ELIGIBLE VETERAN.—Subsection (f)(3) of such section is amended—

(A) in subparagraph (C), by striking ''; and'' and inserting a semicolon;

(B) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; and''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new subparagraph:

''(E) has a traumatic brain injury that is classified as complex-mild to severe.''.

(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015 $46,000,000 to carry out the pilot program under section 1705 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110–181; 38 U.S.C. 1710C note), as amended by this section. The amount so authorized to be appropriated shall be available for obligation for the three-year period beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1, 2014.

SEC. 307. PROGRAM ON HEALTH PROMOTION FOR OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE VETERANS THROUGH SUPPORT OF FITNESS CENTER MEMBERSHIPS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, through the National Center for Preventive Health, carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of promoting health in covered veterans, including achieving a healthy weight and reducing risks of chronic disease, through support for fitness center membership.

(b) COVERED VETERANS.—For purposes of this section, a covered veteran is any veteran who—

(1) is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established and operated by the Secretary under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code;

(2) is determined by a clinician of the Department of Veterans Affairs to be overweight or obese as of the date of the commencement of the program; and

(3) resides in a location that is more than 15 minutes driving distance from a fitness center at a facility of the Department that would otherwise be available to the veteran for at least eight hours per day during five or more days per week.

(c) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The program shall be carried out during the two-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the program, the Secretary shall select—

(A) not less than five medical centers of the Department at which the Secretary shall cover the full reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of such centers; and

(B) not less than five medical centers of the Department at which the Secretary shall cover half the reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of such centers.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting locations for the program, the Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advisability of selecting locations in the following areas:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas in different geographic locations.

(e) PARTICIPATION.—

(1) MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS.—The number of covered veterans who may participate in the program at each location selected under subsection (d) may not exceed 100.

(2) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a covered veteran in the program shall be at the election of the covered veteran in consultation with a clinician of the Department.

(f) MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), in carrying out the program, the Secretary shall pay the following:

(A) The full reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of centers selected under subsection (d)(1)(A) who are participating in the program.

(B) Half the reasonable cost of a fitness center membership for covered veterans within the catchment area of centers selected under subsection (d)(1)(B) who are participating in the program.

(2) LIMITATION.—Payment for a fitness center membership of a covered veteran may not exceed $50 per month of membership.

(g) REPORTS.—

(1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the commencement of the program and not less frequently than once every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on activities carried out to implement the program, including outreach activities to veterans and community organizations.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program detailing—

(A) the findings and conclusions of the Secretary as a result of the program; and

(B) recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program.

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 308. PROGRAM ON HEALTH PROMOTION FOR VETERANS THROUGH ESTABLISHMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FITNESS FACILITIES.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Commencing not later than 180 days after the date on which this section takes effect, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of promoting health in covered veterans, including achieving a healthy weight, through establishment of Department of Veterans Affairs fitness facilities.

(b) COVERED VETERANS.—For purposes of this section, a covered veteran is any veteran who is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established and operated by the Secretary under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code.

(c) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the program by establishing fitness facilities in Department facilities as follows:

(A) In not fewer than five Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

(B) In not fewer than five outpatient clinics of the Department selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting locations for the program, the Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advisability of selecting locations in the following areas:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas in different geographic locations.

(e) LIMITATION ON EXPENSES.—In establishing and supporting a fitness facility in a facility of the Department under the program, the Secretary may expend amounts as follows:

(1) For establishment and support of a fitness facility in a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, not more than $60,000.

(2) For establishment and support of a fitness facility in an outpatient clinic of the Department, not more than $40,000.

(f) REPURPOSING OF PHYSICAL SPACE AND PURCHASES OF EQUIPMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subsection (e), the Secretary may, in carrying out the program, repurpose existing physical space of the Department and purchase such fitness equipment and supplies as the Secretary considers appropriate for purposes of the program.

(2) REPURPOSING EXCEPTION.—Existing physical space used for the direct delivery of health care to patients may not be repurposed under paragraph (1).

(g) PROHIBITION ON ASSESSMENT OF USER FEES.—The Secretary may not assess a fee upon a covered veteran for use of a fitness facility established under the program.

(h) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a covered veteran in the program shall be at the election of the covered veteran.

(i) REPORTS.—

(1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the commencement of the program and not less frequently than once every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on activities carried out to implement the program, including outreach activities to veterans and community organizations.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program detailing—

(A) the findings and conclusions of the Secretary as a result of the program; and

(B) recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program.

(j) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle B—Health Care Administration

SEC. 311. EXTENSION OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.

Section 7619 is amended by striking ''December 31, 2014'' and inserting ''December 31, 2019''.

SEC. 312. EXPANSION OF AVAILABILITY OF PROSTHETIC AND ORTHOTIC CARE FOR VETERANS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OR EXPANSION OF ADVANCED DEGREE PROGRAMS TO EXPAND AVAILABILITY OF PROVISION OF CARE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall work with institutions of higher education to develop partnerships for the establishment or expansion of programs of advanced degrees in prosthetics and orthotics in order to improve and enhance the availability of high quality prosthetic and orthotic care for veterans.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth a plan for carrying out subsection (a). The Secretary shall develop the plan in consultation with veterans service organizations, institutions of higher education with accredited degree programs in prosthetics and orthotics, and representatives of the prosthetics and orthotics field.

(c) FUNDING.—

(1) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, $10,000,000 to carry out this section.

(2) AVAILABILITY.—The amount authorized to be appropriated by paragraph (1) shall remain available for expenditure until September 30, 2017.

SEC. 313. LIMITATION ON EXPANSION OF DIALYSIS PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) LIMITATION.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall not expand the dialysis pilot program to, or expand the capacity to provide additional dialysis care at, any facility owned or leased by the Department that is not an initial facility until after the date that—

(1) the Secretary has implemented the dialysis pilot program at each initial facility for a period of not less than two years;

(2) an independent analysis of the dialysis pilot program has been conducted at each initial facility, including a consideration and comparison of factors including—

(A) the ability of veterans to access care under the dialysis pilot program;

(B) the quality of care provided under the dialysis pilot program; and

(C) the satisfaction of veterans who have received treatment under the dialysis pilot program; and

(3) the report required by subsection (b) has been submitted.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the completion of the independent analysis required by subsection (a)(2), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that—

(1) includes the results of that independent analysis; and

(2) addresses any recommendations with respect to the dialysis pilot program provided in a report prepared by the Government Accountability Office.

(c) UTILIZATION OF EXISTING DIALYSIS RESOURCES.—In order to increase the access of veterans to dialysis care and decrease the travel time of such veterans to receive such care, the Secretary shall fully utilize existing dialysis resources of the Department, including any community dialysis provider with which the Department has entered into a contract or agreement for the provision of such care.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) DIALYSIS PILOT PROGRAM.—The term ''dialysis pilot program'' means the pilot demonstration program established by the Secretary in 2009 to provide dialysis care to patients at certain outpatient facilities operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) INITIAL FACILITY.—The term ''initial facility'' means one of the four outpatient facilities identified by the Secretary to participate in the dialysis pilot program prior to the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 314. REQUIREMENT FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICY ON REPORTING CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES AT FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 73 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7330B. Reporting of infectious diseases

''(a) REPORTING.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Department has in effect an up-to-date policy on reporting a notifiable infectious disease diagnosed at a facility under the jurisdiction of the Secretary in accordance with the provisions of State and local law in effect where such facility is located.

''(b) NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASE.—For purposes of this section, a notifiable infectious disease is any infectious disease that is—

''(1) on the list of nationally notifiable diseases published by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; or

''(2) covered by a provision of law of a State that requires the reporting of infectious diseases.

''(c) PERFORMANCE MEASURES.—The Secretary shall develop performance measures to assess whether and to what degree the directors of Veterans Integrated Service Networks and Department medical centers are complying with the policy required by subsection (a).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7330A the following new item:

''7330B. Reporting of infectious diseases.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 315. INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT OF THE VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS AND MEDICAL CENTERS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) CONTRACT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall seek to enter into a contract with an independent third-party to perform the services covered by this section.

(2) TIMING.—The Secretary shall seek to enter into the contract described in paragraph (1) not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) INDEPENDENT STUDY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Under a contract between the Secretary and an independent third-party under this section, the third party shall carry out a study—

(A) to assess the organizational structures of medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(B) to improve succession planning among key leadership roles at Veterans Integrated Service Networks and medical centers of the Department.

(2) MATTERS STUDIED AND PROPOSED.—In carrying out the study, the third party shall—

(A) assess whether the organizational structure of the medical centers of the Department is effective for the furnishing of medical services, addressing issues that arise regarding the furnishing of medical services, and addressing standard business operations;

(B) propose one organizational chart for Department medical centers with a common set of base position descriptions;

(C) propose a base set of medical positions that should be filled to ensure that the health care provided to veterans by the Department is of good quality; and

(D) identify which key leadership positions at Veterans Integrated Service Networks and Department medical centers should have succession plans and propose how to implement such plans.

(3) TIMING.—The third party shall complete the study under this section not later than 270 days after entering into the contract described in subsection (a).

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date on which the third party completes the study under this section, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the results of such study.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 316. REQUIREMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH NEXT UPDATE OF CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The first update of the Strategic Plan Refresh for Fiscal Years 2012 through 2014 of the Office of Rural Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs after the date of the enactment of this Act, whether an update or refresh of such Strategic Plan Refresh or a strategic plan to supersede such Strategic Plan Refresh, shall be prepared in accordance with this section.

(2) CONSULTATION.—The Director of the Office of Rural Health shall prepare the update in consultation with the following:

(A) The Director of the Health Care Retention and Recruitment Office of the Department.

(B) The Director of the Office of Quality and Performance of the Department.

(C) The Director of the Office of Care Coordination Services of the Department.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The update described in subsection (a) shall include, for the period covered by the update, the following:

(1) Goals and objectives for the recruitment and retention by the Veterans Health Administration of health care personnel in rural areas.

(2) Goals and objectives for ensuring timeliness and improving quality in the delivery of health care services by the Veterans Health Administration in rural areas through contract and fee-basis providers.

(3) Goals and objectives for the implementation, expansion, and enhanced use of telemedicine services by the Veterans Health Administration in rural areas, including through coordination with other appropriate offices of the Department.

(4) Goals and objectives for ensuring the full and effective use of mobile outpatient clinics by the Veterans Health Administration for the provision of health care services in rural areas, including goals and objectives for the use of such clinics on a fully mobile basis and for encouraging health care providers who provide services through such clinics to do so in rural areas.

(5) Procedures for soliciting from each Veterans Health Administration facility that serves a rural area the following:

(A) A statement of the clinical capacity of such facility.

(B) The procedures of such facility in the event of a medical, surgical, or mental health emergency outside the scope of the clinical capacity of such facility.

(C) The procedures and mechanisms of such facility for the provision and coordination of health care for women veterans, including procedures and mechanisms for coordination with local hospitals and health care facilities, oversight of primary care and fee-basis care, and management of specialty care.

(6) Goals and objectives for the modification of the funding allocation mechanisms of the Office of Rural Health in order to ensure that the Office distributes funds to components of the Department to best achieve the goals and objectives of the Office and in a timely manner.

(7) Goals and objectives for the coordination of, and sharing of resources with respect to, the provision of health care services to veterans in rural areas between the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, the Indian Health Service of the Department of Health and Human Services, and other Federal agencies, as appropriate and prudent.

(8) Specific milestones for the achievement of the goals and objectives developed for the update.

(9) Procedures for ensuring the effective implementation of the update.

(c) TRANSMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the issuance of the update described in subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall transmit the update to Congress, together with such comments and recommendations in connection with the update as the Secretary considers appropriate.

SEC. 317. REPORT ON PROVISION OF TELEMEDICINE SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the following:

(1) Issues that may be impeding the provision by the Department of Veterans Affairs of telemedicine services for veterans, including the following:

(A) Statutory or regulatory restrictions.

(B) Licensure or credentialing issues for any provider practicing telemedicine with veterans who live in a different State than the provider.

(C) Limited broadband access in rural areas.

(D) Limited information technology resources or capabilities.

(E) Long distances veterans must travel to access a facility or clinic with telemedicine capabilities.

(F) Insufficient liability protection for providers.

(G) Reimbursement issues faced by providers.

(H) Travel limitations for providers that are unaffiliated with the Department and are participating or seeking to participate in a telemedicine program of the Department.

(2) Actions taken to address the issues identified in paragraph (1).

(3) An update on efforts by the Department to carry out the initiative of teleconsultation for the provision of remote mental health and traumatic brain injury assessments required by section 1709A of title 38, United States Code.

(4) An update on efforts by the Department to offer training opportunities in telemedicine to medical residents, as required by section 108(b) of the Janey Ensminger Act (Public Law 112–154; 38 U.S.C. 7406 note).

(5) An update on efforts by the Department to, in partnership with primary care providers, install video cameras and instruments to monitor weight, blood pressure, and other vital statistics in the homes of patients.

(b) TELEMEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''telemedicine'' means the use by a health care provider of telecommunications to assist in the diagnosis or treatment of a patient's medical condition.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 318. REPORT ON EXPANSION OF PATIENT ENROLLMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the feasibility and advisability of the Department of Veterans Affairs expanding enrollment in the system of patient enrollment established and operated under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code, of veterans described in subsection (a)(8) of that section.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include an analysis of the following:

(1) The ability of the Department to manage an expansion of enrollment in the system of patient enrollment under that section to veterans described in subsection (a)(8) of that section.

(2) The impact of such expansion on the budget of the Department.

(3) The impact of such expansion on the ability of medical centers of the Department to provide health care to veterans.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 319. REPORT ON EXPANSION OF PROGRAM OF COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to Congress a report on the feasibility and advisability of the Department of Veterans Affairs expanding the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under section 1720G of title 38, United States Code.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include an analysis of the following:

(1) The ability of the Department to manage an expansion of the program of comprehensive assistance for family caregivers under that section.

(2) The impact of such expansion on the budget of the Department.

(3) The impact of such expansion on the ability of medical centers of the Department to provide health care to veterans.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 320. DESIGNATION OF CORPORAL MICHAEL J. CRESCENZ DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER.

(a) DESIGNATION.—The medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs located at 3900 Woodland Avenue in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known and designated as the ''Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center''.

(b) REFERENCES.—Any reference in any law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the medical center referred to in subsection (a) shall be considered to be a reference to the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Subtitle C—Complementary and Alternative Medicine

SEC. 321. EXPANSION OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION ON AND DELIVERY OF COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE TO VETERANS.

(a) DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN TO EXPAND RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND DELIVERY.—Not later than six months after the effective date specified in subsection (f), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop a plan to expand materially and substantially the scope of research and education on, and delivery and integration of, complementary and alternative medicine services into the health care services provided to veterans.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The plan required by subsection (a) shall provide for the following:

(1) Research on the following:

(A) The comparative effectiveness of various complementary and alternative medicine therapies.

(B) Approaches to integrating complementary and alternative medicine services into other health care services provided by the Department.

(2) Education and training for health care professionals of the Department on the following:

(A) Complementary and alternative medicine services selected by the Secretary for purposes of the plan.

(B) Appropriate uses of such services.

(C) Integration of such services into the delivery of health care to veterans.

(3) Research, education, and clinical activities on complementary and alternative medicine at centers of innovation at Department medical centers.

(4) Identification or development of metrics and outcome measures to evaluate the provision and integration of complementary and alternative medicine services into the delivery of health care to veterans.

(5) Integration and delivery of complementary and alternative medicine services with other health care services provided by the Department.

(c) CONSULTATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out subsection (a), the Secretary shall consult with the following:

(A) The Director of the National Center on Complementary and Alternative Medicine of the National Institutes of Health.

(B) The Commissioner of Food and Drugs.

(C) Institutions of higher education, private research institutes, and individual researchers with extensive experience in complementary and alternative medicine and the integration of complementary and alternative medicine practices into the delivery of health care.

(D) Nationally recognized providers of complementary and alternative medicine.

(E) Such other officials, entities, and individuals with expertise on complementary and alternative medicine as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) SCOPE OF CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall undertake consultation under paragraph (1) in carrying out subsection (a) with respect to the following:

(A) To develop the plan.

(B) To identify specific complementary and alternative medicine practices that, on the basis of research findings or promising clinical interventions, are appropriate to include as services to veterans.

(C) To identify barriers to the effective provision and integration of complementary and alternative medicine services into the delivery of health care to veterans, and to identify mechanisms for overcoming such barriers.

(d) FUNDING.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary such sums as may be necessary to carry out this section.

(e) COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''complementary and alternative medicine'' shall have the meaning given that term in regulations the Secretary shall prescribe for purposes of this section, which shall, to the degree practicable, be consistent with the meaning given such term by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(f) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 322. PROGRAM ON INTEGRATION OF COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE WITHIN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTERS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) carry out, through the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation of the Department of Veterans Affairs, a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of integrating the delivery of complementary and alternative medicine services selected by the Secretary with other health care services provided by the Department for veterans with mental health conditions, chronic pain conditions, other chronic conditions, and such other conditions as the Secretary determines appropriate; and

(2) in developing the program, identify and resolve barriers to the provision of complementary and alternative medicine services selected by the Secretary and the integration of those services with other health care services provided by the Department.

(b) DURATION OF PROGRAM.—The program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the effective date specified in subsection (j).

(c) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the program at not fewer than 15 separate Department medical centers.

(2) POLYTRAUMA CENTERS.—Not less than two of the medical centers designated under paragraph (1) shall be located at polytrauma rehabilitation centers of the Department.

(3) SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.—In carrying out the program, the Secretary shall select locations that include the following areas:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas representing different geographic locations, such as census tracts established by the Bureau of the Census.

(d) PROVISION OF SERVICES.—Under the program, the Secretary shall provide covered services to covered veterans by integrating complementary and alternative medicine services with other services provided by the Department at the medical centers designated under subsection (c)(1).

(e) COVERED VETERANS.—For purposes of the program, a covered veteran is any veteran who—

(1) has a mental health condition diagnosed by a clinician of the Department;

(2) experiences chronic pain; or

(3) has a chronic condition being treated by a clinician of the Department.

(f) COVERED SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of the program, covered services are services consisting of complementary and alternative medicine as selected by the Secretary.

(2) ADMINISTRATION OF SERVICES.—Covered services shall be administered under the program as follows:

(A) Covered services shall be administered by clinicians employed by the Secretary for purposes of this section who, to the extent practicable, shall provide services consisting of complementary and alternative medicine, including those clinicians who solely provide such services.

(B) Covered services shall be included as part of the Patient Aligned Care Teams initiative of the Office of Patient Care Services, Primary Care Program Office, in coordination with the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation.

(C) Covered services shall be made available to both—

(i) covered veterans with mental health conditions, pain conditions, or chronic conditions described in subsection (e) who have received conventional treatments from the Department for such conditions; and

(ii) covered veterans with mental health conditions, pain conditions, or chronic conditions described in subsection (e) who have not received conventional treatments from the Department for such conditions.

(g) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a veteran in the program shall be at the election of the veteran and in consultation with a clinician of the Department.

(h) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—

(1) QUARTERLY REPORTS.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the commencement of the program and not less frequently than once every 90 days thereafter for the duration of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the efforts of the Secretary to carry out the program, including a description of the outreach conducted by the Secretary to veterans and community organizations to inform such organizations about the program.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program, including with respect to—

(I) the utilization and efficacy of the complementary and alternative medicine services established under the program;

(II) an assessment of the benefit of the program to covered veterans in mental health diagnoses, pain management, and treatment of chronic illness; and

(III) the comparative effectiveness of various complementary and alternative medicine therapies.

(ii) Barriers identified under subsection (a)(2) that were not resolved.

(iii) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(i) COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''complementary and alternative medicine'' shall have the meaning given that term in section 321(e) of this Act.

(j) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 323. STUDIES OF BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED BY VETERANS IN RECEIVING, AND ADMINISTRATORS AND CLINICIANS IN PROVIDING, COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE SERVICES FURNISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) STUDIES REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall conduct comprehensive studies of the barriers encountered by veterans in receiving, and administrators and clinicians in providing, complementary and alternative medicine services furnished by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) STUDIES CONDUCTED.—

(A) VETERANS.—In conducting the study of veterans, the Secretary shall—

(i) survey veterans who seek or receive hospital care or medical services furnished by the Department, as well as veterans who do not seek or receive such care or services;

(ii) administer the survey to a representative sample of veterans from each Veterans Integrated Service Network; and

(iii) ensure that the sample of veterans surveyed is of sufficient size for the study results to be statistically significant.

(B) ADMINISTRATORS AND CLINICIANS.—In conducting the study of clinicians and administrators, the Secretary shall—

(i) survey administrators of the Department who are involved in the provision of health care services;

(ii) survey clinicians that have provided complementary and alternative medicine services through the program established under section 322 of this Act, after those clinicians have provided those services through such program for at least 90 days; and

(iii) administer the survey to administrators under clause (i)—

(I) before the introduction of complementary and alternative medicine services through such program; and

(II) not earlier than 90 days after the introduction of complementary and alternative medicine services through such program.

(b) ELEMENTS OF STUDIES.—

(1) VETERANS.—In conducting the study of veterans required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall study the following:

(A) The perceived barriers associated with obtaining complementary and alternative medicine services from the Department.

(B) The satisfaction of veterans with complementary and alternative medicine services in primary care.

(C) The degree to which veterans are aware of eligibility requirements for, and the scope of services available under, complementary and alternative medicine services furnished by the Department.

(D) The effectiveness of outreach to veterans on the availability of complementary and alternative medicine for veterans.

(E) Such other barriers as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) ADMINISTRATORS AND CLINICIANS.—In conducting the study of administrators and clinicians required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall study the following:

(A) The extent of the integration of complementary and alternative medicine services within the services provided by the Department.

(B) The perception by administrators and clinicians of the structural and attitudinal barriers to the delivery of high quality complementary and alternative medicine services by the Department.

(C) Strategies that have been used to reduce or eliminate such barriers and the results of such strategies.

(D) The satisfaction of administrators and clinicians regarding the integration of complementary and alternative medicine services within the services provided by the Department.

(E) The perception by administrators and clinicians of the value of specific complementary and alternative medicine services for inpatient and outpatient veteran populations.

(c) DISCHARGE BY CONTRACT.—The Secretary shall enter into a contract with a qualified independent entity or organization to carry out the studies required by this section.

(d) MANDATORY REVIEW OF DATA BY THE NATIONAL RESEARCH ADVISORY COUNCIL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ensure that the head of the National Research Advisory Council reviews the results of the studies conducted under this section.

(2) SUBMITTAL OF FINDINGS.—The head of the National Research Advisory Council shall submit findings with respect to the studies to the Under Secretary for Health and to other pertinent program offices within the Department with responsibilities relating to health care services for veterans.

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the status of the implementation of this section.

(2) REPORT ON STUDY.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 45 days after the date of the completion of the study, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the study required by subsection (a).

(B) CONTENTS.—The report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) Recommendations for such administrative and legislative proposals and actions as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(ii) The findings of the head of the National Research Advisory Council and of the Under Secretary for Health.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated for fiscal year 2015 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, $2,000,000 to carry out this section.

(g) COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''complementary and alternative medicine'' shall have the meaning given that term in section 321(e) of this Act.

SEC. 324. PROGRAM ON USE OF WELLNESS PROGRAMS AS COMPLEMENTARY APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program through the award of grants to public or private nonprofit entities to assess the feasibility and advisability of using wellness programs to complement the provision of mental health care to veterans and family members eligible for counseling under section 1712A(a)(1)(C) of title 38, United States Code.

(2) MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED.—The program shall be carried out so as to assess the following:

(A) Means of improving coordination between Federal, State, local, and community providers of health care in the provision of mental health care to veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(B) Means of enhancing outreach, and coordination of outreach, by and among providers of health care referred to in subparagraph (A) on the mental health care services available to veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(C) Means of using wellness programs of providers of health care referred to in subparagraph (A) as complements to the provision by the Department of Veterans Affairs

of mental health care to veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(D) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) are effective in enhancing the quality of life and well-being of veterans and family members described in paragraph (1).

(E) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) are effective in increasing the adherence of veterans described in paragraph (1) to the primary mental health services provided such veterans by the Department.

(F) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) have an impact on the sense of wellbeing of veterans described in paragraph (1) who receive primary mental health services from the Department.

(G) Whether wellness programs described in subparagraph (C) are effective in encouraging veterans receiving health care from the Department to adopt a more healthy lifestyle.

(b) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the program for a period of three years beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program at facilities of the Department providing mental health care services to veterans and family members described in subsection (a)(1).

(d) GRANT PROPOSALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A public or private nonprofit entity seeking the award of a grant under this section shall submit an application therefor to the Secretary in such form and in such manner as the Secretary may require.

(2) APPLICATION CONTENTS.—Each application submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A plan to coordinate activities under the program, to the extent possible, with the Federal, State, and local providers of services for veterans to enhance the following:

(i) Awareness by veterans of benefits and health care services provided by the Department.

(ii) Outreach efforts to increase the use by veterans of services provided by the Department.

(iii) Educational efforts to inform veterans of the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle.

(B) A statement of understanding from the entity submitting the application that, if selected, such entity will be required to report to the Secretary periodically on standardized data and other performance data necessary to evaluate individual outcomes and to facilitate evaluations among entities participating in the program.

(C) Other requirements that the Secretary may prescribe.

(e) GRANT USES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A public or private nonprofit entity awarded a grant under this section shall use the award for purposes prescribed by the Secretary.

(2) ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND FAMILY.—In carrying out the purposes prescribed by the Secretary in paragraph (1), a public or private nonprofit entity awarded a grant under this section shall use the award to furnish services only to individuals specified in section 1712A(a)(1)(C) of title 38, United States Code.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the commencement of the program, and every 180 days thereafter, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report on the program.

(B) REPORT ELEMENTS.—Each report required by subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program during the 180-day period preceding the report.

(ii) An assessment of the benefits of the program to veterans and their family members during the 180-day period preceding the report.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the end of the program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report detailing the recommendations of the Secretary as to the advisability of continuing or expanding the program.

(g) WELLNESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''wellness'' has the meaning given that term in regulations prescribed by the Secretary.

Subtitle D—Mental Health Care

SEC. 331. INCLUSION OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAM FOR HEALTH PERSONNEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—In carrying out the education and training program required under section 7302(a)(1) of title 38, United States Code, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall include education and training of marriage and family therapists and licensed professional mental health counselors.

(b) FUNDING.—The Secretary shall apportion funding for the education and training program equally among the professions included in the program.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 332. REPORT ON PROVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF CERTAIN VETERANS AT FACILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT.

Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the feasibility and advisability of providing services under the program established by section 304(a) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1712A note) at medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

SEC. 333. ANNUAL REPORT ON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and not later than September 30 each year thereafter until the completion of the pilot program described in subsection (b), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on that pilot program.

(b) PILOT PROGRAM DESCRIBED.—The pilot program described in this subsection is the pilot program conducted by the Veterans Health Administration to connect medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs with community-based mental health care providers and substance abuse treatment providers for the purpose of assisting in the treatment of veterans with mental health disorders, commonly known as the ''Community Mental Health Partnership Pilot''.

(c) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) The number of sites participating in the pilot program.

(2) The number of individuals participating in the pilot program at each site.

(3) A detailed assessment of the effectiveness of, the participation of veterans in, and the satisfaction of veterans with the pilot program.

(4) An analysis of barriers to the effectiveness of, the participation of veterans in, and the satisfaction of veterans with the pilot program.

(5) A description of the plans of the Secretary to conduct outreach and provide information to veterans and community mental health providers with respect to the pilot program.

(6) A description of any plans to expand the pilot program, including plans that focus on the unique needs of veterans located in rural areas.

(7) An explanation of how the care provided under the pilot program is consistent with the minimum clinical mental health guidelines promulgated by the Veterans Health Administration, including clinical guidelines contained in the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook of such Administration.

Subtitle E—Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement

SEC. 341. RESTORATIVE DENTAL SERVICES FOR VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1710(c) is amended—

(1) in the second sentence—

(A) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) and (B) as clauses (i) and (ii), respectively; and

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (1) and (2) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively;

(2) by inserting ''(1)'' after ''(c)'';

(3) by striking ''The Secretary'' and inserting the following:

''(2) The Secretary''; and

(4) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) In addition to the dental services, treatment, and appliances authorized to be furnished by paragraph (2), the Secretary may furnish dental services and treatment, and dental appliances, needed to restore functioning in a veteran that is lost as a result of any services or treatment furnished under this subsection.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 342. PILOT PROGRAM ON EXPANSION OF FURNISHING OF DENTAL CARE TO ALL ENROLLED VETERANS.

(a) PILOT PROGRAM REQUIRED.—Commencing not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of furnishing dental care to veterans enrolled in the system of patient enrollment under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code, who are not eligible for dental services and treatment, and related dental appliances, under current authorities.

(b) DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM.—The pilot program shall be carried out during the three-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the pilot program.

(c) LOCATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the pilot program at not fewer than 16 locations as follows:

(A) Four Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers with an established dental clinic.

(B) Four Department medical centers with a current contract for the furnishing of dental care.

(C) Four Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) with space available for the furnishing of services and treatment under the pilot program.

(D) Four facilities selected from among Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Indian Health Service facilities with established dental clinics, of which—

(i) at least one facility shall be such an Indian Health Service facility; and

(ii) any Indian Health Service facility so selected shall be selected in consultation with the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting locations for the pilot program, the Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advisability of selecting locations in each of the following:

(A) Rural areas.

(B) Areas that are not in close proximity to an active duty military installation.

(C) Areas representing different geographic locations, such as census tracts established by the Bureau of Census.

(d) LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING VETERANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The total number of eligible veterans who may participate in the pilot program may not exceed 30,000.

(2) DISTRIBUTION OF LIMITATION.—In applying the limitation in paragraph (1) to the pilot program, the Secretary shall distribute the limitation across and among locations selected for the pilot program in a manner that takes appropriate account of the size and need of veterans for dental services at each such location.

(e) SCOPE OF SERVICES.—The dental services and treatment furnished to veterans under the pilot program shall be consistent with the dental services and treatment furnished by the Secretary to veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 100 percent disabling under the laws administered by the Secretary.

(f) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of a veteran in the pilot program shall be at the election of the veteran.

(g) LIMITATION ON AMOUNT OF SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The total amount the Secretary may expend furnishing dental services and treatment to a veteran participating in the pilot program during any one-year period may not exceed such amount as the Secretary determines appropriate. The amount so determined may not be less than $1,000.

(2) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall make the determination under paragraph (1)—

(A) in consultation with the Director of the Indian Health Service; and

(B) in consultation with the Director of the Health Resources and Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services if one or more Federally Qualified Health Center is selected as a location for the pilot program under subsection (c)(1)(D).

(h) COPAYMENTS.—The Secretary may collect copayments for dental services and treatment furnished under the pilot program in accordance with authorities on the collection of copayments for medical care of veterans under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code.

(i) PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION.—

(1) NOTICE TO ELIGIBLE VETERANS ON PILOT PROGRAM.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary shall inform all veterans eligible to participate in the pilot program of the services and treatment available under the pilot program.

(2) CONTRACTS.—In carrying out the pilot program, the Secretary may enter into contracts with appropriate entities for the provision of dental services and treatment under the pilot program. Each such contract shall specify performance standards and metrics and processes for ensuring compliance of the contractor concerned with such performance standards.

(j) REPORTS.—

(1) PRELIMINARY REPORTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than each of 540 days and three years after the date of the commencement of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) A description of the implementation and operation of the pilot program.

(ii) The number of veterans receiving services and treatment under the pilot program, and a description of the dental services and treatment furnished to such veterans.

(iii) An analysis of the costs and benefits of the pilot program, including a comparison of costs and benefits by location type.

(iv) An assessment of the impact of the pilot program on medical care, wellness, employability, and perceived quality of life of veterans.

(v) The current findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the pilot program.

(vi) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the pilot program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the completion of the pilot program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the pilot program.

(B) CONTENTS.—The report under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the pilot program.

(ii) Such recommendations for the continuation or expansion of the pilot program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(k) FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER DEFINED.—In this section the term ''Federally Qualified Health Center'' means a Federally-qualified health center as defined in section 1905(l)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396d(l)(2)(B)).

(l) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 343. PROGRAM ON EDUCATION TO PROMOTE DENTAL HEALTH IN VETERANS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program of education to promote dental health for veterans who are enrolled in the system of patient enrollment of the Department of Veterans Affairs under section 1705 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in the program shall be deemed to alter or revise the eligibility of any veteran for dental care under the laws administered by the Secretary.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The program required by subsection (a) shall provide education for veterans on the following:

(1) The association between dental health and overall health and well-being.

(2) Proper techniques for dental care.

(3) Signs and symptoms of commonly occurring dental conditions.

(4) Treatment options for commonly occurring dental issues.

(5) Options for obtaining access to dental care, including information on eligibility for dental care through the Department and on purchasing private dental insurance.

(6) Available and accessible options for obtaining low or no-cost dental care, including through dental schools and Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

(7) Such other matters relating to dental health as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) DELIVERY OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide educational materials to veterans under the program required by subsection (a) through a variety of mechanisms, including the following:

(A) The availability and distribution of print materials at Department facilities (including at medical centers, clinics, Vet Centers, and readjustment counseling centers) and to providers (including members of Patient Aligned Care Teams).

(B) The availability and distribution of materials over the Internet, including through webinars and My Health *e*Vet.

(C) Presentations of information, including both small group and large group presentations.

(2) SELECTION OF MECHANISMS.—In selecting mechanisms for purposes of this subsection, the Secretary shall select mechanisms designed to maximize the number of veterans who receive education under the program.

(d) FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER DEFINED.—In this section the term ''Federally Qualified Health Center'' means a Federally-qualified health center as defined in section 1905(l)(2)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396d(l)(2)(B)).

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 344. INFORMATION ON DENTAL SERVICES FOR INCLUSION IN ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS UNDER DENTAL INSURANCE PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Commencing not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall expand the dental insurance pilot program established by section 17.169 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, to establish a mechanism by which private sector dental care providers shall forward to the Department of Veterans Affairs information on dental care furnished to individuals under the pilot program for inclusion in the electronic medical records of the Department with respect to such individuals.

(b) CONSTRUCTION WITH CURRENT PILOT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to revise eligibility for participation in, or the locations of, the pilot program referred to in subsection (a).

(2) DURATION.—The Secretary may continue the pilot program for two years in addition to the duration otherwise provided for the pilot program in section 17.169 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, if the Secretary determines that the continuation is needed to assess the mechanism required by subsection (a).

(3) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN MECHANISM.—The participation in the mechanism required by subsection (a) of an individual otherwise participating in the pilot program shall be at the election of the individual.

(c) INCLUSION OF INFORMATION ON MECHANISM IN REPORTS.—Each report to Congress on the pilot program after the date of the commencement of the mechanism required by subsection (a) shall include information on the mechanism, including a current assessment of the feasability and advisability of using the mechanism to include information on dental care furnished individuals in the electronic medical records of the Department with respect to such individuals.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 345. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated for the Department of Veterans Affairs for fiscal year 2015 $305,000,000 to carry out this subtitle and the amendments made by this subtitle. The amount so authorized to be appropriated shall be available for obligation for the five-year period beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle F—Health Care Related to Sexual Trauma

SEC. 351. EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR SEXUAL TRAUMA COUNSELING AND TREATMENT TO VETERANS ON INACTIVE DUTY TRAINING.

Section 1720D(a)(1) is amended by striking ''or active duty for training'' and inserting '', active duty for training, or inactive duty training''.

SEC. 352. PROVISION OF COUNSELING AND TREATMENT FOR SEXUAL TRAUMA BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) EXPANSION OF COVERAGE TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.—Subsection (a) of section 1720D is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3);

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2)(A) In operating the program required by paragraph (1), the Secretary may, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, provide counseling and care and services to members of the Armed Forces (including members of the National Guard and Reserves) on active duty to overcome psychological trauma described in that paragraph.

''(B) A member described in subparagraph (A) shall not be required to obtain a referral before receiving counseling and care and services under this paragraph.''; and

(3) in paragraph (3), as redesignated by paragraph (1)—

(A) by striking ''a veteran'' and inserting ''an individual''; and

(B) by striking ''that veteran'' each place it appears and inserting ''that individual''.

(b) INFORMATION TO MEMBERS ON AVAILABILITY OF COUNSELING AND SERVICES.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended—

(1) by striking ''to veterans'' each place it appears; and

(2) in paragraph (3), by inserting ''members of the Armed Forces and'' before ''individuals''.

(c) INCLUSION OF MEMBERS IN REPORTS ON COUNSELING AND SERVICES.—Subsection (e) of such section is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking ''to veterans'';

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) by striking ''women veterans'' and inserting ''individuals''; and

(B) by striking ''training under subsection (d).'' and inserting ''training under subsection (d), disaggregated by—

''(A) veterans;

''(B) members of the Armed Forces (including members of the National Guard and Reserves) on active duty; and

''(C) for each of subparagraphs (A) and (B)—

''(i) men; and

''(ii) women.'';

(3) in paragraph (4), by striking ''veterans'' and inserting ''individuals''; and

(4) in paragraph (5)—

(A) by striking ''women veterans'' and inserting ''individuals'' ; and

(B) by inserting '', including specific recommendations for individuals specified in subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of paragraph (2)'' before the period at the end.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 353. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS SCREENING MECHANISM TO DETECT INCIDENTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall develop and implement a screening mechanism to be used when a veteran seeks healthcare services from the Department of Veterans Affairs to detect if the veteran has been a victim of domestic abuse for purposes of improving the treatment of the veteran and assessing the prevalence of domestic abuse in the veteran population.

(b) READILY AVAILABLE SCREENING TOOLS.—In developing and implementing a screening mechanism under subsection (a), the Secretary may incorporate into the screening mechanism such readily available screening tools as the Secretary considers appropriate for the screening mechanism.

(c) DOMESTIC ABUSE DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''domestic abuse'' means behavior with respect to an individual that—

(1) constitutes—

(A) a pattern of behavior resulting in physical or emotional abuse, economic control, or interference with the personal liberty of that individual;

(B) a violation of Federal or State law involving the use, attempted use, or threatened use of force or violence against that individual; or

(C) a violation of a lawful order issued for the protection of that individual; and

(2) is committed by a person who—

(A) is a current or former spouse or domestic partner of that individual;

(B) shares a child in common with that individual;

(C) is a current or former intimate partner of that individual that shares or has shared a common domicile with that individual;

(D) is a caregiver or family caregiver of that individual (as such terms are defined in section 1720G(d) of title 38, United States Code); or

(E) is in any other type of relationship with that individual that the Secretary may specify for purposes of this section.

SEC. 354. REPORTS ON MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA AND DOMESTIC ABUSE.

(a) REPORT ON SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Not later than 630 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the treatment and services available from the Department of Veterans Affairs for male veterans who experience military sexual trauma compared to such treatment and services available to female veterans who experience military sexual trauma.

(b) REPORT ON DOMESTIC ABUSE AMONG VETERANS.—Not later than two years after the implementation of the screening mechanism required by section 353(a) of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, shall jointly submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on domestic abuse among veterans that includes the following:

(1) A summary of the types, outcomes, and circumstances of incidents of domestic abuse that have been reported by veterans during the two-year period preceding the submission of the report.

(2) A summary of the treatments available from the Department of Veterans Affairs for veterans who experience domestic abuse and an assessment of the effectiveness of those treatments.

(3) Data and analysis on any correlation between an incident of military sexual trauma or sexual trauma experienced after the age of 18 and domestic abuse.

(4) Any other issues that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs or the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention determines appropriate.

(c) REPORTS ON TRANSITION OF MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA AND DOMESTIC ABUSE TREATMENT FROM DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—Not later than 630 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter for five years, the Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Joint Executive Committee established by section 320(a) of title 38, United States Code, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on military sexual trauma and domestic abuse that includes the following:

(1) The processes and procedures utilized by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to facilitate transition of treatment of individuals who have experienced military sexual trauma or domestic abuse from treatment provided by the Department of Defense to treatment provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) A description and assessment of the collaboration between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense in assisting veterans in filing claims for disabilities related to military sexual trauma or domestic abuse, including permitting veterans access to information and evidence necessary to develop or support such claims.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—The term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives.

(2) DOMESTIC ABUSE.—The term ''domestic abuse'' has the meaning given that term in section 353(c) of this Act.

(3) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' means psychological trauma, which in the judgment of a mental health professional employed by the Department, resulted from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the veteran was serving on active duty or active duty for training.

(4) SEXUAL HARASSMENT.—The term ''sexual harassment'' means repeated, unsolicited verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature which is threatening in character.

(5) SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning given that term by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for purposes of this section.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is 270 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle G—Adoption Assistance, Child Care Assistance, and Counseling

SEC. 361. ADOPTION ASSISTANCE FOR SEVERELY WOUNDED VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter VIII of chapter 17 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1788. Adoption assistance

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may pay an amount, not to exceed the limitation amount, to assist a covered veteran in the adoption of one or more children.

''(b) COVERED VETERAN.—For purposes of this section, a covered veteran is any severely wounded, ill, or injured veteran who—

''(1) has an infertility condition incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service; and

''(2) is enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established under section 1705(a) of this title.

''(c) LIMITATION AMOUNT.—For purposes of this section, the limitation amount is equal

to the cost the Department would incur by paying the expenses of three adoptions by covered veterans, as determined by the Secretary.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1787 the following new item:

''1788. Adoption assistance.''.

SEC. 362. COORDINATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ON FURNISHING OF FERTILITY COUNSELING AND TREATMENT.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense shall share best practices and facilitate referrals, as they consider appropriate, on the furnishing of fertility counseling and treatment.

SEC. 363. PROGRAM ON ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.

(a) ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS RECEIVING HEALTH CARE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 17 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1709B. Assistance for child care for certain veterans receiving health care

''(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to provide, subject to subsection (b), assistance to qualified veterans described in subsection (c) to obtain child care so that such veterans can receive health care services described in subsection (c).

''(b) LIMITATION ON PERIOD OF PAYMENTS.—Assistance may only be provided to a qualified veteran under this section for receipt of child care during the period that the qualified veteran—

''(1) receives health care services described in subsection (c) at a facility of the Department; and

''(2) requires travel to and from such facility for the receipt of such health care services.

''(c) QUALIFIED VETERANS.—For purposes of this section, a qualified veteran is a veteran who is—

''(1) the primary caretaker of a child or children; and

''(2)(A) receiving from the Department—

''(i) regular mental health care services;

''(ii) intensive mental health care services; or

''(iii) such other intensive health care services that the Secretary determines that provision of assistance to the veteran to obtain child care would improve access to such health care services by the veteran; or

''(B) in need of regular or intensive mental health care services from the Department, and but for lack of child care services, would receive such health care services from the Department.

''(d) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program in no fewer than three Veterans Integrated Service Networks selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

''(e) FORMS OF CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE.—(1) Child care assistance under this section may include the following:

''(A) Stipends for the payment of child care offered by licensed child care centers (either directly or through a voucher program) which shall be, to the extent practicable, modeled after the Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Subsidy Program established pursuant to section 630 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2002 (Public Law 107–67; 115 Stat. 552).

''(B) Direct provision of child care at an on-site facility of the Department.

''(C) Payments to private child care agencies.

''(D) Collaboration with facilities or programs of other Federal departments or agencies.

''(E) Such other forms of assistance as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(2) In the case that child care assistance under this section is provided as a stipend under paragraph (1)(A), such stipend shall cover the full cost of such child care.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1709A the following new item:

''1709B. Assistance for child care for certain veterans receiving health care.''.

(3) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 205(e) of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1710 note) is amended by inserting ''but not after the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014'' before the period at the end.

(b) ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE FOR INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING READJUSTMENT COUNSELING AND RELATED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 17, as amended by subsection (a)(1) of this section, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1709C. Assistance for child care for individuals receiving readjustment counseling and related mental health services

''(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary shall carry out a program to provide, subject to subsection (b), assistance to qualified individuals described in subsection (c) to obtain child care so that such individuals can receive readjustment counseling and related mental health services.

''(b) LIMITATION ON PERIOD OF PAYMENTS.—Assistance may only be provided to a qualified individual under this section for receipt of child care during the period that the qualified individual receives readjustment counseling and related health care services at a Vet Center.

''(c) QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS.—For purposes of this section, a qualified individual is an individual who is—

''(1) the primary caretaker of a child or children; and

''(2)(A) receiving from the Department regular readjustment counseling and related mental health services; or

''(B) in need of readjustment counseling and related mental health services from the Department, and but for lack of child care services, would receive such counseling and services from the Department.

''(d) LOCATIONS.—The Secretary shall carry out the program under this section in no fewer than three Readjustment Counseling Service Regions selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

''(e) FORMS OF CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE.—(1) Child care assistance under this section may include the following:

''(A) Stipends for the payment of child care offered by licensed child care centers (either directly or through a voucher program) which shall be, to the extent practicable, modeled after the Department of Veterans Affairs Child Care Subsidy Program established pursuant to section 630 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act, 2002 (Public Law 107–67; 115 Stat. 552).

''(B) Payments to private child care agencies.

''(C) Collaboration with facilities or programs of other Federal departments or agencies.

''(D) Such other forms of assistance as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(2) In the case that child care assistance under this subsection is provided as a stipend under paragraph (1)(A), such stipend shall cover the full cost of such child care.

''(f) VET CENTER DEFINED.—In this section, the term 'Vet Center' means a center for readjustment counseling and related mental health services for individuals under section 1712A of this title.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17, as amended by subsection (a)(2) of this section, is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1709B the following new item:

''1709C. Assistance for child care for individuals receiving readjustment counseling and related mental health services.''.

SEC. 364. COUNSELING IN RETREAT SETTINGS FOR WOMEN VETERANS NEWLY SEPARATED FROM SERVICE IN THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) COUNSELING IN RETREAT SETTINGS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 17 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 1720H. Counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide, through the Readjustment Counseling Service of the Veterans Health Administration, reintegration and readjustment services described in subsection (c) in group retreat settings to women veterans who are recently separated from service in the Armed Forces after a prolonged deployment.

''(b) ELECTION OF VETERAN.—The receipt of services under this section by a woman veteran shall be at the election of the veteran.

''(c) COVERED SERVICES.—The services provided to a woman veteran under this section shall include the following:

''(1) Information on reintegration into the veteran's family, employment, and community.

''(2) Financial counseling.

''(3) Occupational counseling.

''(4) Information and counseling on stress reduction.

''(5) Information and counseling on conflict resolution.

''(6) Such other information and counseling as the Secretary considers appropriate to assist the veteran in reintegration into the veteran's family, employment, and community.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 17 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 1720G the following new item:

''1720H. Counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service in the Armed Forces.''.

(b) REPEAL OF SUPERSEDED PILOT PROGRAM AUTHORITY.—Section 203 of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–163; 38 U.S.C. 1712A note) is hereby repealed.

Subtitle H—Major Medical Facility Leases

SEC. 371. AUTHORIZATION OF MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITY LEASES.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may carry out the following major medical facility leases at the locations specified, and in an amount for each lease not to exceed the amount shown for such location (not including any estimated cancellation costs):

(1) For a clinical research and pharmacy coordinating center, Albuquerque, New Mexico, an amount not to exceed $9,560,000.

(2) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Brick, New Jersey, an amount not to exceed $7,280,000.

(3) For a new primary care and dental clinic annex, Charleston, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $7,070,250.

(4) For the Cobb County community-based Outpatient Clinic, Cobb County, Georgia, an amount not to exceed $6,409,000.

(5) For the Leeward Outpatient Healthcare Access Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, including a co-located clinic with the Department of Defense and the co-location of the Honolulu Regional Office of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Kapolei Vet Center of the Department of Veterans Affairs, an amount not to exceed $15,887,370.

(6) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Johnson County, Kansas, an amount not to exceed $2,263,000.

(7) For a replacement community-based outpatient clinic, Lafayette, Louisiana, an amount not to exceed $2,996,000.

(8) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lake Charles, Louisiana, an amount not to exceed $2,626,000.

(9) For outpatient clinic consolidation, New Port Richey, Florida, an amount not to exceed $11,927,000.

(10) For an outpatient clinic, Ponce, Puerto Rico, an amount not to exceed $11,535,000.

(11) For lease consolidation, San Antonio, Texas, an amount not to exceed $19,426,000.

(12) For a community-based outpatient clinic, San Diego, California, an amount not to exceed $11,946,100.

(13) For an outpatient clinic, Tyler, Texas, an amount not to exceed $4,327,000.

(14) For the Errera Community Care Center, West Haven, Connecticut, an amount not to exceed $4,883,000.

(15) For the Worcester community-based Outpatient Clinic, Worcester, Massachusetts, an amount not to exceed $4,855,000.

(16) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, an amount not to exceed $4,232,060.

(17) For a multispecialty clinic, Chattanooga, Tennessee, an amount not to exceed $7,069,000.

(18) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Chico, California, an amount not to exceed $4,534,000.

(19) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Chula Vista, California, an amount not to exceed $3,714,000.

(20) For a new research lease, Hines, Illinois, an amount not to exceed $22,032,000.

(21) For a replacement research lease, Houston, Texas, an amount not to exceed $6,142,000.

(22) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lincoln, Nebraska, an amount not to exceed $7,178,400.

(23) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Lubbock, Texas, an amount not to exceed $8,554,000.

(24) For a community-based outpatient clinic consolidation, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, an amount not to exceed $8,022,000.

(25) For a community-based outpatient clinic, Phoenix, Arizona, an amount not to exceed $20,757,000.

(26) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Redding, California, an amount not to exceed $8,154,000.

(27) For the expansion of a community-based outpatient clinic, Tulsa, Oklahoma, an amount not to exceed $13,269,200.

SEC. 372. BUDGETARY TREATMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITIES LEASES.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) Title 31, United States Code, requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to record the full cost of its contractual obligation against funds available at the time a contract is executed.

(2) Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11 provides guidance to agencies in meeting the statutory requirements under title 31, United States Code, with respect to leases.

(3) For operating leases, Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11 requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to record upfront budget authority in an ''amount equal to total payments under the full term of the lease or [an] amount sufficient to cover first year lease payments plus cancellation costs''.

(b) REQUIREMENT FOR OBLIGATION OF FULL COST.—Subject to the availability of appropriations provided in advance, in exercising the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into leases provided in this Act, the Secretary shall record, pursuant to section 1501 of title 31, United States Code, as the full cost of the contractual obligation at the time a contract is executed either—

(1) an amount equal to total payments under the full term of the lease; or

(2) if the lease specifies payments to be made in the event the lease is terminated before its full term, an amount sufficient to cover the first year lease payments plus the specified cancellation costs.

(c) TRANSPARENCY.—

(1) COMPLIANCE.—Subsection (b) of section 8104 is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(7) In the case of a prospectus proposing funding for a major medical facility lease, a detailed analysis of how the lease is expected to comply with Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11 and section 1341 of title 31 (commonly referred to as the 'Anti-Deficiency Act'). Any such analysis shall include—

''(A) an analysis of the classification of the lease as a 'lease-purchase', 'capital lease', or 'operating lease' as those terms are defined in Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11;

''(B) an analysis of the obligation of budgetary resources associated with the lease; and

''(C) an analysis of the methodology used in determining the asset cost, fair market value, and cancellation costs of the lease.''.

(2) SUBMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—Such section 8104 is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(h)(1) Not less than 30 days before entering into a major medical facility lease, the Secretary shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives—

''(A) notice of the Secretary's intention to enter into the lease;

''(B) a copy of the proposed lease;

''(C) a description and analysis of any differences between the prospectus submitted pursuant to subsection (b) and the proposed lease; and

''(D) a scoring analysis demonstrating that the proposed lease fully complies with Office of Management and Budget Circular A–11.

''(2) Each committee described in paragraph (1) shall ensure that any information submitted to the committee under such paragraph is treated by the committee with the same level of confidentiality as is required by law of the Secretary and subject to the same statutory penalties for unauthorized disclosure or use as the Secretary.

''(3) Not more than 30 days after entering into a major medical facility lease, the Secretary shall submit to each committee described in paragraph (1) a report on any material differences between the lease that was entered into and the proposed lease described under such paragraph, including how the lease that was entered into changes the previously submitted scoring analysis described in subparagraph (D) of such paragraph.''.

(d) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section, or the amendments made by this section, shall be construed to in any way relieve the Department of Veterans Affairs from any statutory or regulatory obligations or requirements existing prior to the enactment of this section and such amendments.

TITLE IV—EMPLOYMENT AND RELATED MATTERS

Subtitle A—Training and Other Services for Veterans Seeking Employment

SEC. 401. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO PROVIDE REHABILITATION AND VOCATIONAL BENEFITS TO MEMBERS OF ARMED FORCES WITH SEVERE INJURIES OR ILLNESSES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1631(b)(2) of the Wounded Warrior Act (title XVI of Public Law 110–181; 10 U.S.C. 1071 note) is amended by striking ''December 31, 2014'' and inserting ''December 31, 2016''.

(b) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the benefits provided by the Secretary under section 1631(b) of such Act.

(2) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this subsection, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(A) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 402. CONSOLIDATED AND COORDINATED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTERNET PORTAL TO CONNECT CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WITH EMPLOYERS SEEKING EMPLOYEES WITH SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPED THROUGH MILITARY SERVICE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Although significant progress has been made, unemployment among veterans remains stubbornly high.

(2) The unemployment rate among younger veterans, ages 18 to 24, remains well above the national average.

(3) This problem impacts the Department of Defense budget. Over the past 10 years, the Federal Government has expended more than $9,600,000,000 on unemployment compensation benefits for former members of the Armed Forces.

(4) The Department makes significant investments in members of the Armed Forces including specialized technical training in skills that are easily transferrable to civilian career fields.

(5) Beyond specific technical training, veterans gain unique leadership, organizational, and other skills that make them valued employees in the private sector.

(6) Government agencies, private sector entities, and nonprofit organizations are responding to the issue of unemployment among veterans.

(7) There are now so many programs to assist veterans in finding employment, many within the Government, that veterans may not know where to seek assistance in finding employment. While these programs are well intentioned, many are duplicative in nature and compete for scarce resources.

(8) The Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, and the Office of Personnel Management are currently working to consolidate the veterans employment initiatives of the Government into a single, consolidated Internet portal with the goal of connecting veterans who are seeking employment with employers who want to employ them.

(9) The consolidated portal will prevent Federal Government agencies from competing with each other to accomplish the same goal, and will save the Federal Government money while providing a comprehensive, coordinated tool for employers and veterans seeking employment.

(10) The Federal Government can accomplish this by leveraging the best practices of current programs.

(11) While progress has been made, there is no statutory requirement to streamline these Government programs and coordinate the resources that are all intended to achieve the same goal.

(b) CONSOLIDATED INTERNET PORTAL REQUIRED.—Commencing not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (h), the Secretary of Labor shall, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and organizations concerned with veterans resources, consolidate Internet portals of the Federal Government on employment for current and former members of the Armed Forces into a comprehensive, consolidated Internet portal within a single existing platform or system for the purposes of connecting current and former members of the Armed Forces who are seeking employment with employers who want to employ them.

(c) ELEMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The consolidated Internet portal under subsection (b) should include the following:

(A) A means through which current and former members of the Armed Forces may connect for employment purposes with employers seeking the experience and skills developed during service in the Armed Forces, including a means of presenting a profile of each member or former member to employers that includes, at a minimum—

(i) the skills obtained by such member or former member during service in the Armed Forces and additional skills such member or former member is interested in pursuing; and

(ii) the current or intended residence of such member or former member (including an option for members or former members who are willing to reside in various locations).

(B) A means of permitting qualified prospective employers to post employment openings and seek contact with members or former members based on their profile for the purposes of requesting the initiation of arrangements or negotiations concerning potential employment.

(C) A means of presenting other employment resources, including resume preparation, to members or former members seeking employment.

(2) MATTERS CONSIDERED.—In developing the consolidated Internet portal, the Secretaries referred to in subsection (b) should consider, at a minimum, the following:

(A) Public and private sector resources on matters relating to the portal.

(B) Opportunities to incorporate local employment networks into the portal.

(C) Methodologies to determine the most effective employment resources and programs to be incorporated into the portal.

(D) Means for streamlining processes through the portal for employers to find and employ former members of the Armed Forces.

(d) MEMBER PARTICIPATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Participation in the consolidated Internet portal under subsection (b) shall be limited to members of the National Guard and Reserves, members of the Armed Forces on active duty who are transitioning from military service to civilian life, former members of the Armed Forces, and veterans.

(2) VOLUNTARY.—Participation by a member or former member of the Armed Forces described in paragraph (1) in the consolidated Internet portal shall be voluntary. A member or former member participating in the portal may cease participation in the portal at any time.

(e) REPORTS BY IMPLEMENTING SECRETARIES.—

(1) PRELIMINARY REPORT.—Not later than six months after the effective date specified in subsection (h), the Secretaries shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the consolidated Internet portal under subsection (b). The report shall include the following:

(A) A list of the Internet portals of the Federal Government that are redundant to, or duplicative of, the consolidated Internet portal.

(B) An estimate of the cost-savings to be achieved by the Federal Government through the consolidated Internet portal, including through the elimination or consolidation into the consolidated Internet portal of the Internet portals listed under subparagraph (A).

(2) REPORT FOLLOWING IMPLEMENTATION OF PORTAL.—Not later than one year after the date of the implementation of the consolidated Internet portal under subsection (b), the Secretaries shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the portal.

(3) ELEMENTS.—Each report under this subsection shall include a description of the consolidated Internet portal and such other information on the portal as the Secretaries consider appropriate.

(f) COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 540 days after the effective date specified in subsection (h), the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the elimination by Federal agencies of Internet portals that are redundant to, or duplicative of, the consolidated Internet portal under subsection (b).

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report shall include the following:

(A) The list of the internet portals of the Federal Government at the time of the implementation of the consolidated Internet portal that are determined by the Comptroller General to have been redundant to, or duplicative of, the consolidated Internet portal.

(B) An assessment whether the list of internet portals under subsection (e)(1)(A) encompassed all the Internet portals of the Federal Government that were redundant to, or duplicative of, the consolidated Internet portal.

(C) An assessment of the actions taken by Federal agencies to eliminate Internet portals that were redundant to, or duplicative of, the consolidated Internet portal.

(D) A list of Internet portals of the Federal Government determined to be redundant to, or duplicative of the consolidated Internet portal that have yet to be eliminated by Federal agencies as of the date of the report.

(g) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services, the Committee on Education and the Workforce, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives.

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle B—Employment of Veterans and Recognition of Veteran Status With Respect to Employment Related Matters

SEC. 411. EMPLOYMENT OF VETERANS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4214 is amended—

(1) in subsection (b), by adding at the end the following:

''(4)(A) The requirement under this paragraph is in addition to the appointment of qualified covered veterans under the authority specified in subparagraph (C) by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.

''(B) The head of each agency, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, shall develop a plan for exercising the authority specified in subparagraph (C) during the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014.

''(C) The authority specified in this subparagraph is the authority as follows:

''(i) The authority under paragraph (1).

''(ii) The authority available to the agency concerned under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–339) and the amendments made by that Act.

''(D) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall ensure that under the plans developed under subparagraph (B) agencies shall appoint to existing vacancies not fewer than 15,000 qualified covered veterans during the five-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014. For purposes of complying with this subparagraph, an appointment pursuant to the authority referred to in subparagraph (C)(ii) shall not count toward the number required by this subparagraph unless the appointment is to a vacancy in a full-time, permanent position.'';

(2) in subsection (d), in the third sentence, by inserting ''(including, during the 5-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, the development and implementation by each agency of the plan required under subsection (b)(4), which shall include information regarding the grade or pay level of appointments by the agency under the plan and whether the appointments are, or are converted to, career or career-conditional appointments)'' after ''subsection (b) of this section''; and

(3) in subsection (e)—

(A) in paragraph (1)—

(i) in the matter before subparagraph (A), by striking ''to the Congress'' and inserting ''to the appropriate committees of Congress''; and

(ii) in subparagraph (A), by inserting ''(including, during the 5-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, the development and implementation by the agency of the plan required under subsection (b)(4), which shall include information regarding the grade or pay level of appointments by the agency under the plan and whether the appointments are, or are converted to, permanent appointments)'' before the period; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) In this subsection, the term 'appropriate committees of Congress' means—

''(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate; and

''(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives.''.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress (as defined under section 4214(e)(3) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a)) regarding the development of a plan to carry out the amendments made by subsection (a).

SEC. 412. STATE RECOGNITION OF MILITARY EXPERIENCE OF VETERANS IN ISSUING LICENSES AND CREDENTIALS TO VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 4102A(c) is amended by striking paragraph (9) and inserting the following new paragraph (9):

''(9)(A) As a condition of a grant or contract under which funds are made available to a State under subsection (b)(5) in order to carry out section 4103A or 4104 of this title, the State shall—

''(i) establish a program under which the State administers an examination to each veteran seeking a license or credential issued by the State and issues such license or credential to such veteran without requiring such veteran to undergo any training or apprenticeship if the veteran—

''(I) receives a satisfactory score on completion of such examination, as determined by the State;

''(II) has been awarded a military occupational specialty that is substantially equivalent to or exceeds the requirements of the State for the issuance of such license or credential;

''(III) has engaged in the active practice of the occupation for which the veteran is seeking such license or credential for at least two of the five years preceding the date of application; and

''(IV) pays any customary or usual fees required by the State for such license or credential; and

''(ii) submit each year to the Secretary a report on the exams administered under clause (i) during the most recently completed 12-month period that includes, for the period covered by the report the number of veterans who completed an exam administered by the State under clause (i) and a description of the results of such exams, disaggregated by occupational field.

''(B) The Secretary may waive the requirement under subparagraph (A) that a State establish a program described in that subparagraph as a condition of a grant or contract if the State certifies to the Secretary that the State—

''(i) takes into account previous military training for the purposes of issuing licenses or credentials;

''(ii) permits veterans to completely satisfy through examination any training or testing requirements for a license or credential with respect to which a veteran has previously completed military training; and

''(iii) for any credential or license for which a veteran is unable to completely satisfy such requirements through examination, the State substantially reduces training time required to satisfy such requirement based on the military training received by the veteran.

''(C) Not less frequently than once each year, the Secretary shall submit to Congress and the Secretary of Defense a report summarizing the information received by the Secretary under subparagraph (A)(ii).''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—

(1) EXAMS.—Subparagraph (A) of section 4102A(c)(9) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to grants and contracts described in such subparagraph awarded after such date.

(2) REPORTS.—Subparagraph (B) of such section 4102A(c)(9), as so added, shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and the Secretary of Labor shall submit the first report under such subparagraph not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 413. EMPLOYMENT OF VETERANS AS EVALUATION FACTOR IN THE AWARDING OF FEDERAL CONTRACTS.

(a) CIVILIAN CONTRACTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 33 of title 41, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 3313. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor

''The head of each executive agency shall consider favorably as an evaluation factor in solicitations for contracts and task or delivery orders valued at or above $25,000,000 the employment by a prospective contractor of veterans constituting at least 5 percent of the contractor's workforce.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 33 of such title is amended by adding after the item relating to section 3312 the following new item:

''3313. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor.''.

(b) DEFENSE CONTRACTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 137 of title 10, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 2338. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor

''The head of each agency shall consider favorably as an evaluation factor in solicitations for contracts and task or delivery orders valued at or above $25,000,000 the employment by a prospective contractor of veterans constituting at least 5 percent of the contractor's workforce.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 137 of such title is amended by adding after the item relating to section 2337 the following new item:

''2338. Employment of veterans as evaluation factor.''.

(c) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council shall amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation to carry out the provisions of section 3313 of title 41, United States Code, and section 2338 of title 10, United States Code, as added by subsections (a) and (b), respectively.

SEC. 414. REPORT ON DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MEMBERS OF RESERVE COMPONENTS OF ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS IN CIVILIAN LABOR MARKET.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 570 days after the date of the enactment of this act, the Secretary of Labor, in coordination with the heads of such agencies as the Secretary considers appropriate, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on barriers and potential discrimination facing veterans in the labor market.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) An evaluation of the following:

(A) The extent to which members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces and veterans face barriers to entry into the civilian labor market, including whether such members and veterans face obstacles in obtaining employment, maintaining employment, or receiving promotions while employed.

(B) The extent to which a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces or a veteran faces discrimination in the civilian labor market based on the member's or veteran's status as a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces or as a veteran, as the case may be.

(C) The adequacy and effectiveness of Federal laws in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act in preventing or ameliorating acts of discrimination against members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces and veterans seeking or retaining employment in the civilian labor market.

(D) The adequacy and effectiveness of programs of the Department of Labor in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act in educating private sector employers on matters relevant to hiring and employing veterans and the military experience of veterans.

(2) Such recommendations as the Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action—

(A) to address barriers or discrimination that members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces and veterans may face in the civilian labor market;

(B) to improve education and outreach for employers in the civilian labor market on issues regarding hiring and employing such members and veterans; and

(C) to assist employers in the civilian labor market in matching the military experience of such members and veterans with the needs of such employers.

(3) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(1) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle C—Improving Employment and Reemployment Rights of Members of the Uniformed Services

SEC. 421. SUSPENSION, TERMINATION, OR DEBARMENT OF CONTRACTORS FOR REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OR REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS OF MEMBERS OF UNIFORMED SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter III of chapter 43 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 4328. Suspension, termination, or debarment of contractors

''(a) GROUNDS FOR SUSPENSION, TERMINATION, OR DEBARMENT.—Payment under a contract awarded by a Federal executive agency may be suspended and the contract may be terminated, and the contractor who made the contract with the agency may be suspended or debarred in accordance with the requirements of this section, if the head of the agency determines that the contractor as an employer has repeatedly been convicted of failing or refusing to comply with one or more provisions of this chapter.

''(b) EFFECT OF DEBARMENT.—A contractor debarred by a final decision under this section is ineligible for award of a contract by a Federal executive agency, and for participation in a future procurement by a Federal executive agency, for a period specified in the decision, not to exceed 5 years.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 43 is

amended by inserting after the item relating to section 4327 the following new item:

''4328. Suspension, termination, or debarment of contractor.''.

(c) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council shall amend the Federal Acquisition Regulation to carry out section 4328 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a).

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Section 4328 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to failures and refusals to comply with provisions of chapter 43 of title 38, United States Code, occurring on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(e) ANNUAL REPORT.—Section 4332(a) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (10) as paragraph (11); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (9) the following new paragraph (10):

''(10) The number of suspensions, terminations, and debarments under section 4328 of this title, disaggregated by the agency or department imposing the suspension or debarment.''.

Subtitle D—Small Business Matters

SEC. 431. EXPANSION OF CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO INCLUDE CONDITIONALLY OWNED SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS 100 PERCENT OWNED BY VETERANS.

Section 8127(l) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''unconditionally'' before ''owned by'' each place it appears; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) The term 'unconditionally owned' includes, with respect to ownership of a small business concern, conditional ownership of such small business concern if such business concern is 100 percent owned by one or more veterans.''.

SEC. 432. MODIFICATION OF TREATMENT UNDER CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES OWNED BY VETERANS OF SMALL BUSINESSES AFTER DEATH OF DISABLED VETERAN OWNERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8127(h) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3), by striking ''rated as'' and all that follows through ''disability.'' and inserting a period; and

(2) in paragraph (2), by amending subparagraph (C) to read as follows:

''(C) The date that—

''(i) in the case of a surviving spouse of a veteran with a service-connected disability rated as 100 percent disabling or who dies as a result of a service-connected disability, is 10 years after the date of the veteran's death; or

''(ii) in the case of a surviving spouse of a veteran with a service-connected disability rated as less than 100 percent disabling who does not die as a result of a service-connected disability, is three years after the date of the veteran's death.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to applications received pursuant to section 8127(f)(2) of title 38, United States Code, that are verified on or after such date.

SEC. 433. TREATMENT OF BUSINESSES AFTER DEATHS OF SERVICEMEMBER-OWNERS FOR PURPOSES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 8127 is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (i) through (l) as subsections (j) through (m), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (h) the following new subsection (i):

''(i) TREATMENT OF BUSINESSES AFTER DEATH OF SERVICEMEMBER-OWNER.—(1) If a member of the Armed Forces owns at least 51 percent of a small business concern and such member is killed in line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service, the surviving spouse or dependent child of such member who acquires such ownership rights in such small business concern shall, for the period described in paragraph (2), be treated as if the surviving spouse or dependent child were a veteran with a service-connected disability for purposes of determining the status of the small business concern as a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans for purposes of contracting goals and preferences under this section.

''(2) The period referred to in paragraph (1) is the period beginning on the date on which the member of the Armed Forces dies and ending on the date as follows:

''(A) In the case of a surviving spouse, the earliest of the following dates:

''(i) The date on which the surviving spouse remarries.

''(ii) The date on which the surviving spouse relinquishes an ownership interest in the small business concern and no longer owns at least 51 percent of such small business concern.

''(iii) The date that is ten years after the date of the member's death.

''(B) In the case of a dependent child, the earliest of the following dates:

''(i) The date on which the surviving dependent child relinquishes an ownership interest in the small business concern and no longer owns at least 51 percent of such small business concern.

''(ii) The date that is ten years after the date of the member's death.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsection (i) of section 8127 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to the deaths of members of the Armed Forces occurring on or after such date.

SEC. 434. SPECIAL RULE FOR TREATMENT UNDER CONTRACTING GOALS AND PREFERENCES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF SMALL BUSINESS CONCERNS LICENSED IN COMMUNITY PROPERTY STATES.

Section 8127, as amended by section 433 of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(n) SPECIAL RULE FOR COMMUNITY PROPERTY STATES.—Whenever the Secretary assesses, for purposes of this section, the degree of ownership by an individual of a small business concern licensed in a community property State, the Secretary shall also assess what that degree of ownership would be if such small business concern had been licensed in a State other than a community property State. If the Secretary determines that such individual would have had a greater degree of ownership of the small business concern had such small business concern been licensed in a State other than a community property State, the Secretary shall treat, for purposes of this section, such small business concern as if it had been licensed in a State other than a community property State.''.

SEC. 435. REPORT ON ASSISTANCE FOR VETERANS IN OBTAINING TRAINING ON PURCHASING AND OPERATING A FRANCHISE.

(a) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Secretary of Labor shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, and other appropriate entities, submit to Congress a report on the assistance available to veterans to obtain training necessary to purchase and operate a franchise.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The report required by subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) A description of the assistance available for veterans through the Department of Labor, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Small Business Administration, or any other agency of the Federal Government in order to obtain training necessary to purchase or operate a franchise.

(2) Information on the number of veterans who have sought and obtained the training described in paragraph (1) during the five calendar years preceding the report.

(3) A description of any barriers encountered by veterans in obtaining the training described in paragraph (1).

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE V—ACCOUNTABILITY AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS

SEC. 501. ADMINISTRATION OF VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.

(a) VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 73 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7310. Veterans Integrated Service Networks

''(a) ORGANIZATION.—(1) The Secretary shall organize the Veterans Health Administration in geographically defined Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

''(2) Each Veterans Integrated Service Network shall be organized in consideration of the following:

''(A) The size of the veteran population of the region of the network.

''(B) The complexity of the medical needs of the veterans in such region.

''(C) Patient referral patterns.

''(D) The availability of a full continuum of health care services.

''(E) The ability of the Department to furnish health care efficiently.

''(F) Partnerships with non-Department health care entities.

''(b) STAFFING MODEL.—(1) The Secretary shall establish a staffing model for each Veterans Integrated Service Network that—

''(A) is appropriate for the mission and responsibilities of the Veterans Integrated Service Network; and

''(B) accounts for the specific health care needs of differing populations in the Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(2) The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network complies with the staffing model established by the Secretary under paragraph (1) for such Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(c) INTEGRATED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.—The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network maintains a regional integrated healthcare system by—

''(1) implementing alliances with such other governmental, public, and private health care organizations and practitioners as the Secretary considers appropriate to meet the needs of veterans in the Network;

''(2) providing oversight and management of, and taking responsibility for, a regional budget for the activities of the Veterans Health Administration in the geographic area of the Network that is—

''(A) aligned with the budget guidelines of the Department and the Veterans Health Administration;

''(B) balanced at the end of each fiscal year; and

''(C) sufficient to provide high-quality health care to veterans within the region and to meet any unique needs of the veterans of the region;

''(3) using national metrics to develop systems to provide effective, efficient, and safe delivery of health care; and

''(4) ensuring high-quality clinical programs and services are rendered in and through—

''(A) the medical centers and outpatient clinics of the Department that are located in the Network; and

''(B) other non-Department clinical or health care delivery settings located in the Network.

''(d) REDUCTION IN DUPLICATE FUNCTIONS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Veterans Integrated Service Networks identify and reduce, whenever practicable, the duplication of functions in clinical, administrative, and operational processes and practices of the Veterans Health Administration.

''(e) COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION.—The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network—

''(1) works to achieve maximum effectiveness in patient care and safety, graduate medical education, and research; and

''(2) assesses the consolidation or realignment of institutional functions, including capital asset, safety, and operational support functions, in collaboration and cooperation with other Veterans Integrated Service Networks and the following offices or entities within the geographical area of the Network:

''(A) The offices of the Veterans Benefits Administration and the National Cemetery Administration.

''(B) The offices, installations, and facilities of the Department of Defense, including the offices, installations, and facilities of each branch of the Armed Forces and the reserve components of the Armed Forces.

''(C) The offices, installations, and facilities of the Coast Guard.

''(D) Offices of State and local agencies that have a mission to provide assistance to veterans.

''(E) Medical schools and other affiliates.

''(F) Offices of Congress, offices of State and local elected officials, and other government offices.

''(G) Federal, State, and local emergency preparedness organizations.

''(H) Community and nonprofit organizations.

''(I) Such other entities of the Federal Government as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(f) HEADQUARTERS.—(1) The Secretary shall ensure that each Veterans Integrated Service Network has only one headquarters office.

''(2) The location of a headquarters office for a Veterans Integrated Service Network shall be determined by the Secretary and co-located with a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.

''(3)(A) The Secretary may employ or contract for the services of such full time equivalent employees and contractors at the headquarters of each Veterans Integrated Service Network as the Secretary considers appropriate in accordance with the staffing models established under subsection (b).

''(B) Not later than December 31 each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on employment at the headquarters of Veterans Integrated Service Networks during the most recently completed fiscal year.

''(C) Each report submitted under subparagraph (B) shall include the following for the year covered by the report:

''(i) The number of individuals employed at each headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(ii) The number of individuals employed by the Veterans Health Administration in each Veterans Integrated Service Network who are not employed at the same location as the headquarters of the Network.

''(iii) The title for each position of employment at a headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service Network.

''(iv) The title for each position of employment with the Veterans Health Administration in each Veterans Integrated Service Network that is not at the same location as the headquarters of the Network.

''(v) An assessment of the impact on the budget of the Department by the employment of individuals at the headquarters of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

''(g) TRIENNIAL STRUCTURE REVIEW, REASSESSMENT, AND REPORT.—(1) Beginning three years after the date of the enactment of this section and not less frequently than once every three years thereafter, the Secretary shall conduct a review and assessment of the structure and operations of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks in order to identify recommendations—

''(A) for streamlining and reducing costs associated with the operation of each headquarters of a Veterans Integrated Service Network; and

''(B) for reducing costs of health care within the Veterans Health Administration.

''(2) Not later than 180 days after conducting a review and assessment under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee of Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on such review and assessment, which shall include such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate to improve the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.''.

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7309 the following new item:

''7310. Veterans Integrated Service Networks.''.

(b) RELOCATION OF HEADQUARTERS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a headquarters office of a Veterans Integrated Service Network that on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act was in a location that was not co-located with a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center and the Secretary is engaged in a lease for such location, the Secretary may—

(A) relocate such headquarters upon the expiration of such lease so that such headquarters is co-located as required by section 7310(f)(2) of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)(1)); or

(B) notwithstanding such section 7310(f)(2) (as so added), renew such lease or enter into a new lease to keep such headquarters in such location.

(2) REPORT.—If the Secretary renews a lease or engages in a new lease under paragraph (1)(B), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, before renewing such lease or engaging in such lease, a report describing the reasons for such renewal or engagement. Such report shall include the following:

(A) A list of Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers in the Veterans Integrated Service Network of the headquarters with underutilized buildings, the number of such buildings, and the total underutilized square footage for each such medical center.

(B) The cost of the current lease (the annual amount of rent, the total cost over the life of the lease, and the total cost per square foot) and the current square footage being leased.

(C) The cost of the new lease (the annual amount of rent, the total cost over the life of the lease, and the total cost per square foot) and the square footage to be leased.

(c) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to require any change in the location or type of medical care or service provided by a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, a Department community based outpatient clinic, a center for readjustment counseling and related mental health services for veterans under section 1712A of title 38, United States Code (known as a ''vet center''), or other facility that provides direct care or services under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section, and the amendments made by this section, shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 502. REGIONAL SUPPORT CENTERS FOR VETERANS INTEGRATED SERVICE NETWORKS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter I of chapter 73, as amended by section 501(a)(1) of this Act, is further amended by adding at the end the following new section:

''§ 7310A. Regional support centers for Veterans Integrated Service Networks

''(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary shall establish not more than four regional support centers within the Veterans Health Administration to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks. The head of each regional support center shall report to the Under Secretary of Health.

''(b) FUNCTIONS.—The functions of the regional support centers established under subsection (a) are as follows:

''(1) To assess the quality of work performed within finance operations and other compliance related activities of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks.

''(2) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts outreach to veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, or any other contingency operation (as that term is defined in section 101 of title 10).

''(3) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts programs for the benefit of women veterans.

''(4) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network conducts programs that address homelessness among veterans.

''(5) To assess how effectively and efficiently each Veterans Integrated Service Network consumes energy.

''(6) To assess such other matters concerning the operations and activities of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(c) STAFF.—The Secretary may hire such employees and contractors as the Secretary considers appropriate to carry out the functions of the regional support centers.

''(d) LOCATION OF REGIONAL SUPPORT CENTERS.—(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), the location of each regional support center established under subsection (a) shall be determined by the Secretary and co-located with a medical center of the Department.

''(2) The Secretary may choose a location for a regional support center established under subsection (a) that is not co-located with a medical center of the Department if the Secretary submits to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of

Representatives, before entering into a contract for a location that is not co-located with a medical center, a report describing the reasons for choosing a location for the regional support center that is not co-located with a medical center of the Department. Such report shall include the following:

''(A) A list of medical centers of the Department in the Veterans Integrated Service Network of the regional support center with underutilized buildings, the number of all Veterans Health Administration buildings in such Network, and the total underutilized square footage for each medical center of the Department in such Network.

''(B) The estimated cost of such lease (the annual amount of rent, the total cost over the life of the lease, and the total cost per square foot) and the square footage to be leased.''.

(b) INITIAL STAFFING.—In providing for the initial staff of each regional support center established under section 7310A(a) of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, to the degree practicable, transfer employees from headquarters of Veterans Integrated Service Networks to regional support centers who were employed in positions at such headquarters that covered functions similar to those described in section 7310A(b) of such title, as so added.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 73, as amended by section 501(a)(2) of this Act, is further amended by inserting after the item relating to section 7310 the following new item:

''7310A. Regional support centers for Veterans Integrated Service Networks.''.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to require any change in the location or type of medical care or service provided by a Department of Veterans Affairs medical center, a Department community based outpatient clinic, a center for readjustment counseling and related mental health services for veterans under section 1712A of title 38, United States Code (known as a ''vet center''), or other facility that provides direct care or services under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section, and the amendments made by this section, shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 503. COMMISSION ON CAPITAL PLANNING FOR DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL FACILITIES.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMISSION.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established the Commission on Capital Planning for Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Facilities (in this section referred to as the ''Commission'').

(2) MEMBERSHIP.—

(A) VOTING MEMBERS.—The Commission shall, subject to subparagraph (B), be composed of 10 voting members as follows:

(i) 1 shall be appointed by the President.

(ii) 1 shall be appointed by the Administrator of General Services.

(iii) 3 shall be appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, of whom—

(I) 1 shall be an employee of the Veterans Health Administration;

(II) 1 shall be an employee of the Office of Asset Enterprise Management of the Department of Veterans Affairs; and

(III) 1 shall be an employee of the Office of Construction and Facilities Management of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(iv) 1 shall be appointed by the Secretary of Defense from among employees of the Army Corps of Engineers.

(v) 1 shall be appointed by the majority leader of the Senate.

(vi) 1 shall be appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

(vii) 1 shall be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(viii) 1 shall be appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives.

(B) REQUIREMENT RELATING TO CERTAIN APPOINTMENTS OF VOTING MEMBERS.—Of the members appointed pursuant to clause (i), (ii), and (iv) through (viii) of subparagraph (A), all shall have expertise in capital leasing, construction, or health facility management planning.

(C) NON-VOTING MEMBERS.—The Commission shall be assisted by 10 non-voting members, appointed by the vote of a majority of members of the Commission under subparagraph (A), of whom—

(i) 6 shall be representatives of veterans service organizations recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs; and

(ii) 4 shall be individuals from outside the Department of Veterans Affairs with experience and expertise in matters relating to management, construction, and leasing of capital assets.

(D) DATE OF APPOINTMENT OF VOTING MEMBERS.—The appointments of the members of the Commission under subparagraph (A) shall be made not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(3) PERIOD OF APPOINTMENT; VACANCIES.—Members shall be appointed for the life of the Commission. Any vacancy in the Commission shall not affect its powers, but shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

(4) INITIAL MEETING.—Not later than 15 days after the date on which 7 members of the Commission have been appointed, the Commission shall hold its first meeting.

(5) MEETINGS.—The Commission shall meet at the call of the Chair.

(6) QUORUM.—A majority of the members of the Commission shall constitute a quorum, but a lesser number of members may hold hearings.

(7) CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR.—The Commission shall select a Chair and Vice Chair from among its members.

(b) DUTIES OF COMMISSION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Commission shall undertake a comprehensive evaluation and assessment of various options for capital planning for Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities, including an evaluation and assessment of the mechanisms by which the Department currently selects means for the delivery of health care, whether by major construction, major medical facility leases, sharing agreements with the Department of Defense, the Indian Health Service, and Federally Qualified Health Clinics under section 330 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254b), contract care, multisite care, telemedicine, extended hours for care, or other means.

(2) CONTEXT OF EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT.—In undertaking the evaluation and assessment, the Commission shall consider—

(A) the importance of access to health care through the Department, including associated guidelines of the Department on access to, and drive time for, health care;

(B) limitations and requirements applicable to the construction and leasing of medical facilities for the Department, including applicable laws, regulations, and costs as determined by both the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget;

(C) the nature of capital planning for Department medical facilities in an era of fiscal uncertainty;

(D) projected future fluctuations in the population of veterans; and

(E) the extent to which the Department was able to meet the mandates of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Commission.

(3) PARTICULAR CONSIDERATIONS.—In undertaking the evaluation and assessment, the Commission shall address, in particular, the following:

(A) The Major Medical Facility Lease Program of the Department, including an identification of potential improvements to the lease authorization processes under that Program.

(B) The management processes of the Department for its Major Medical Facility Construction Program, including processes relating to contract award and management, project management, and processing of change orders.

(C) The overall capital planning program of the Department for medical facilities, including an evaluation and assessment of—

(i) the manner in which the Department determines whether to use capital or non-capital means to expand access to health care;

(ii) the manner in which the Department determines the disposition of under-utilized and un-utilized buildings on campuses of Department medical centers, and any barriers to disposition;

(iii) the effectiveness of the facility master planning initiative of the Department; and

(iv) the extent to which sustainable attributes are planned for to decrease operating costs for Department medical facilities.

(D) The current backlog of construction projects for Department medical facilities, including an identification of the most effective means to quickly secure the most critical repairs required, including repairs relating to facility condition deficiencies, structural safety, and compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990.

(4) REPORTS.—Subject to paragraph (5), the Commission shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and to the Committee Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives, reports as follows:

(A) Not later than six months after its initial meeting under subsection (a)(4), a report on the Major Medical Facility Lease Program and the Congressional lease authorization process.

(B) Not later than one year after its initial meeting, a report—

(i) on the management processes of the Department for the construction of Department medical facilities; and

(ii) setting forth an update of any matters covered in the report under subparagraph (A).

(C) Not later than 18 months after its initial meeting, a report—

(i) on the overall capital planning program of the Department for medical facilities; and

(ii) setting forth an update of any matters covered in earlier reports under this paragraph.

(D) Not later than two years after its initial meeting, a report—

(i) on the current backlog of construction projects for Department medical facilities;

(ii) setting forth an update of any matters covered in earlier reports under this paragraph; and

(iii) including such other matters relating to the duties of the Commission that the Commission considers appropriate.

(E) Not later than 27 months after its initial meeting, a report on the implementation by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs pursuant to subsection (g) of the recommendations included pursuant to paragraph (5) in the reports under this paragraph.

(5) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Each report under paragraph (4) shall include, for the aspect of the capital asset planning process of the Department covered by such report, such recommendations as the Commission considers appropriate for the improvement and enhancement of such aspect of the capital asset planning process.

(c) POWERS OF COMMISSION.—

(1) HEARINGS.—The Commission may hold such hearings, sit and act at such times and places, take such testimony, and receive such evidence as the Commission considers advisable to carry out this section.

(2) INFORMATION FROM FEDERAL AGENCIES.—The Commission may secure directly from any Federal department or agency such information as the Commission considers necessary to carry out this section. Upon request of the Chair of the Commission, the head of such department or agency shall furnish such information to the Commission.

(d) COMMISSION PERSONNEL MATTERS.—

(1) COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS.—Each member of the Commission who is not an officer or employee of the Federal Government shall be compensated at a rate equal to the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code, for each day (including travel time) during which such member is engaged in the performance of the duties of the Commission. All members of the Commission who are officers or employees of the United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for their services as officers or employees of the United States.

(2) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—The members of the Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, at rates authorized for employees of agencies under subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5, United States Code, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services for the Commission.

(3) STAFF.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The Chair of the Commission may, without regard to the civil service laws and regulations, appoint and terminate an executive director and such other additional personnel as may be necessary to enable the Commission to perform its duties. The employment of an executive director shall be subject to confirmation by the Commission.

(B) COMPENSATION.—The Chair of the Commission may fix the compensation of the executive director and other personnel without regard to chapter 51 and subchapter III of chapter 53 of title 5, United States Code, relating to classification of positions and General Schedule pay rates, except that the rate of pay for the executive director and other personnel may not exceed the rate payable for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(4) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Any Federal Government employee may be detailed to the Commission without reimbursement, and such detail shall be without interruption or loss of civil service status or privilege.

(5) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMITTENT SERVICES.—The Chair of the Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code, at rates for individuals which do not exceed the daily equivalent of the annual rate of basic pay prescribed for level V of the Executive Schedule under section 5316 of such title.

(e) TERMINATION OF COMMISSION.—The Commission shall terminate 60 days after the date on which the Commission submits its report under subsection (b)(4)(E).

(f) FUNDING.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make available to the Commission such amounts as the Secretary and the Chair of the Commission jointly consider appropriate for the Commission to perform its duties under this section.

(g) ACTION ON RECOMMENDATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall implement each recommendation included in a report under subsection (b)(4) that the Secretary considers feasible and advisable and can be implemented without further legislative action.

(2) REPORTS.—Not later than 120 days after receipt of a report under subparagraphs (A) through (D) of subsection (b)(4), the Secretary shall submit to the Committee Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the following:

(A) An assessment of the feasibility and advisability of each recommendation contained in such report.

(B) For each recommendation assessed as feasible and advisable—

(i) if such recommendation does not require further legislative action for implementation, a description of the actions taken, and to be taken, by the Secretary to implement such recommendation; and

(ii) if such recommendation requires further legislative action for implementation, recommendations for such legislative action.

SEC. 504. ADVANCE APPROPRIATIONS FOR CERTAIN ACCOUNTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 117 is amended—

(1) by striking ''medical care accounts of the Department'' each place it appears and inserting ''covered accounts of the Department'';

(2) in subsection (c)—

(A) by striking ''medical care accounts of the Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs account'' and inserting ''accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs account'';

(B) in paragraph (1), by inserting ''Veterans Health Administration,'' after ''(1)'';

(C) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''Veterans Health Administration,'' after ''(2)'';

(D) in paragraph (3), by inserting ''Veterans Health Administration,'' after ''(3)'';

(E) by redesignating paragraphs (1) through (3) as paragraphs (7) through (9), respectively;

(F) by inserting before paragraph (7), as redesignated by subparagraph (E), the following new paragraphs:

''(1) Veterans Benefits Administration, Compensation and Pensions.

''(2) Veterans Benefits Administration, Readjustment Benefits.

''(3) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Insurance and Indemnities.

''(4) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Housing Benefit Program Fund.

''(5) Veterans Benefits Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation Loans Program Account.

''(6) Veterans Benefits Administration, Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program Account.''; and

(G) in the subsection heading, by striking ''MEDICAL CARE ACCOUNTS'' and inserting ''COVERED ACCOUNTS''; and

(3) in the section heading, by striking ''**certain medical care accounts**'' and inserting ''**certain accounts**''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to fiscal year 2016 and each subsequent fiscal year.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 1105 of title 31, United States Code, is amended by striking the first paragraph (37) and inserting the following:

''(37) information on estimates of appropriations for the fiscal year following the fiscal year for which the budget is submitted for the following accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs:

''(A) Veterans Benefits Administration, Compensation and Pensions.

''(B) Veterans Benefits Administration, Readjustment Benefits.

''(C) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Insurance and Indemnities.

''(D) Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Housing Benefit Program Fund.

''(E) Veterans Benefits Administration, Vocational Rehabilitation Loans Program Account.

''(F) Veterans Benefits Administration, Native American Veteran Housing Loan Program Account.

''(G) Veterans Health Administration, Medical Services.

''(H) Veterans Health Administration, Medical Support and Compliance.

''(I) Veterans Health Administration, Medical Facilities.''.

(d) TECHNICAL CORRECTION.—Such section is further amended by redesignating the second paragraph (37), as added by section 11(a)(2) of the GPRA Modernization Act of 2010 (Public Law 111–352; 124 Stat. 3881), as paragraph (39).

SEC. 505. PUBLIC ACCESS TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RESEARCH AND DATA SHARING BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNET WEBSITE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall make available on an Internet website of the Department of Veterans Affairs available to the public the following:

(1) Data files that contain information on research of the Department.

(2) A data dictionary on each data file.

(3) Instructions for how to obtain access to each data file for use in research.

(b) PUBLIC ACCESS TO MANUSCRIPTS ON DEPARTMENT FUNDED RESEARCH.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Beginning not later than 540 days after the effective date specified in subsection (e), the Secretary shall require, as a condition on the use of any data gathered or formulated from research funded by the Department, that any final, peer-reviewed manuscript prepared for publication that uses such data be submitted to the Secretary for deposit in the digital archive under paragraph (2) and publication under paragraph (3).

(2) DIGITAL ARCHIVE.—Not later than 540 days after the effective date specified in subsection (e), the Secretary shall—

(A) establish a digital archive consisting of manuscripts described in paragraph (1); or

(B) partner with another executive agency to compile such manuscripts in a digital archive.

(3) PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.—

(A) AVAILABILITY OF ARCHIVE.—The Secretary shall ensure that the digital archive under paragraph (2) and the contents of such archive are available to the public via a publicly accessible Internet website at no cost to the public.

(B) AVAILABILITY OF MANUSCRIPTS.—The Secretary shall ensure that each manuscript submitted to the Secretary under paragraph (1) is available to the public under subparagraph (A) not later than one year after the official date on which the manuscript is otherwise published.

(4) CONSISTENT WITH COPYRIGHT LAW.—The Secretary shall carry out this subsection in a manner consistent with applicable copyright law.

(5) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the date the Secretary begins making manuscripts available to the public under this subsection and not less frequently than once each year thereafter, the Secretary

shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the implementation of this subsection during the most recent one-year period.

(B) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include for the period of the report:

(i) The number of manuscripts submitted under paragraph (1).

(ii) The titles of such manuscripts.

(iii) The authors of such manuscripts.

(iv) For each such manuscript, the name and issue number or volume number, as the case may be, of the journal or other publication in which such manuscript was published.

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DATA SHARING BETWEEN DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (e), the Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Joint Executive Committee established by section 320(a) of title 38, United States Code, shall submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense options and recommendations for the establishment of a program for long-term cooperation and data sharing between and within the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense to facilitate research on outcomes of military service, readjustment after combat deployment, and other topics of importance to the following:

(1) Veterans.

(2) Members of the Armed Forces.

(3) Family members of veterans.

(4) Family members of members of the Armed Forces.

(5) Members of communities that have a significant population of veterans or members of the Armed Forces.

(d) EXECUTIVE AGENCY DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''executive agency'' has the meaning given that term in section 133 of title 41, United States Code.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 506. ASSESSMENT BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF INFORMATION MADE AVAILABLE BY VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION.

(a) ASSESSMENT OF INFORMATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall—

(1) conduct an assessment of the process by which the Veterans Benefits Administration informs veterans, veterans service organizations, and such other persons as the Comptroller General considers appropriate regarding the furnishing of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to determine the extent to which the process results in disseminated information that—

(A) adequately supports and improves the timeliness and accuracy of decisions made by the Administration with respect to claims for disability compensation and such other benefits furnished under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as the Comptroller General considers appropriate; and

(B) encourages the filing of fully developed claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary; and

(2) assess how the Veterans Benefits Administration notifies each claimant during, and as part of, any electronic filing process established by the Secretary for the filing of applications for disability compensation and such other benefits under laws administered by the Secretary as the Comptroller General considers appropriate that services may be available to the claimant from a veterans service organization.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the findings of the Comptroller General under subsection (a). Such report shall include such recommendations as the Comptroller General may have for legislative or administrative action to improve the availability of information made available to the public by the Veterans Benefits Administration regarding the furnishing of benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(c) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''veterans service organization'' means an organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 507. COMPTROLLER GENERAL REPORT ON ADVISORY COMMITTEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the advisory committees of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) CONTENTS.—The report required by subsection (a)—

(1) shall include—

(A) recommendations or proposals for continuing, modifying, or terminating certain advisory committees, including noting areas of overlap and duplication among the advisory committees; and

(B) such other information as the Comptroller General considers appropriate; and

(2) may include—

(A) a description of each advisory committee, including with respect to each committee—

(i) the purpose of the committee;

(ii) the commencement date of the committee; and

(iii) the anticipated termination date of the committee;

(B) a summary of the anticipated expenses and the actual expenses incurred for each advisory committee during the most recent three fiscal years ending before the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(C) with respect to meetings held by each advisory committee—

(i) the frequency with which each committee has met during the shorter of—

(I) the most recent three fiscal years ending before the date of the enactment of this Act; and

(II) the life of the committee;

(ii) the date of the most recent meeting held by the committee before such date of enactment; and

(iii) the date of the most recent report or other written product developed by the committee before such date of enactment.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE VI—IMPROVEMENT OF PROCESSING OF CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION

Subtitle A—Claims Based on Military Sexual Trauma

SEC. 601. MEDICAL EXAMINATION AND OPINION FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION CLAIMS BASED ON MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 5103A(d) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3)(A) In the case of a claim for disability compensation based on a mental health condition related to military sexual trauma, the Secretary shall treat an examination or opinion as being necessary to make a decision on a claim for purposes of paragraph (1) if the evidence of record before the Secretary, taking into consideration all information and lay or medical evidence (including statements of the claimant)—

''(i)(I) contains competent evidence that the claimant has a current disability, or persistent or recurrent symptoms of disability; and

''(II) indicates that the disability or symptoms may be associated with the claimant's active military, naval, or air service; but

''(ii) does not contain a diagnosis or opinion by a mental health professional that may assist in corroborating the occurrence of a military sexual trauma stressor related to a diagnosable mental health condition.

''(B) In this paragraph, the term 'military sexual trauma' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this paragraph, and shall include 'sexual harassment' (as so specified).''.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 18 months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the number of examinations and opinions conducted by the Secretary pursuant to paragraph (3) of section 5103A(d) of title 38, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)), including the following:

(1) The number of examinations conducted using a standardized disability assessment.

(2) The number of examinations conducted using a non-standardized clinical interview.

SEC. 602. CASE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICERS FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA SUPPORT.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall assign to each individual seeking compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary based on military sexual trauma a case representative officer who shall provide advice and general information to such individual on the claims process for such compensation. Each case representative officer so assigned shall be assigned from among current personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) LIAISON.—A case representative officer assigned to an individual under subsection (a) shall be responsible for serving as a liaison between the individual, an authorized agent or attorney of the individual under section 5904 of title 38, United States Code, or an otherwise accredited representative of the individual, and the Department of Veterans Affairs on matters relating to the claim of the individual for compensation under the laws administered by the Secretary.

(c) CASE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICER REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE.—Each case representative officer assigned under subsection (a) shall be competent and knowledgeable about the following:

(A) The claims adjudication process and applicable laws, regulations, and other authority applicable to the adjudication of disability claims based on military sexual trauma.

(B) Such other services to victims of sexual trauma as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(2) LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO WHICH ASSIGNED.—A case representative officer may not be assigned to more individuals described in subsection (a) than, as determined by the Secretary, is appropriate for the provision of individual case management assistance by such officer.

(d) INFORMATION ON BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS RELATING TO MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall make available to the public information on the availability of case representative officers under subsection (a) to assist in the application for benefits based on military sexual trauma. The Secretary shall revise and update the information so made available in order to ensure that the information is as current as possible.

(2) INDIVIDUALS SEPARATING FROM MILITARY SERVICE.—The Secretary shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, ensure that individuals who are being separated from the active military, naval, or air service are provided appropriate information about programs, requirements, and procedures for applying for benefits based on military sexual trauma and the availability of case representative officers under subsection (a).

(e) INFORMATION ON TRAINING FOR AGENTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED CASE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICER.—The Secretary shall make available to the authorized agent or attorney of an individual assigned a case representative under subsection (a), or to the otherwise accredited representative of the individual, any relevant materials used to train such case representative officer for the duties of such position.

(f) ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN VETERANS CONSIDERATION OF MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE COORDINATION BETWEEN VBA AND VHA ON BENEFITS FOR MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The Advisory Committee on Women Veterans established under section 542 of title 38, United States Code, shall undertake actions to identify mechanisms to enhance coordination between the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration in the provision of benefits based on military sexual trauma, including the identification of barriers to the appropriate provision of benefits for military sexual trauma by such Administrations and of means of eliminating or reducing such barriers.

(g) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not less frequently than annually, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth the following:

(1) A certification whether or not the case representative officers assigned under subsection (a) during the preceding year met the requirements specified in subsection (c).

(2) A description of the current training the Secretary provides to employees of the Veterans Benefits Administration on claims for benefits based on military sexual trauma, including the frequency, length, and content of such training.

(3) A description of current policies and procedures on the training the Secretary provides to case representative officers, including the current position descriptions for case representative officers.

(4) A description of current efforts to coordinate activities and assistance provided to individuals who seek care or benefits for military sexual trauma between the Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration, including the efforts of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans under subsection (f).

(h) SUNSET.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—No case representative officer may be assigned under subsection (a) after December 31, 2018.

(2) CONTINUATION OF DUTIES AFTER SUNSET DATE.—Paragraph (1) shall not be construed to prohibit any case representative officer assigned to an individual before the date specified in that paragraph from performing duties pursuant to this section after that date with respect to a claim for which that case representative officer was assigned to such individual before that date.

(i) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ACTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL, OR AIR SERVICE.—The term ''active military, naval, or air service'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section, and shall include ''sexual harassment'' (as so specified).

SEC. 603. REPORT ON STANDARD OF PROOF FOR SERVICE-CONNECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS RELATED TO MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the current standard of proof for service-connection under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, for covered mental health conditions based on military sexual trauma.

(b) RECOMMENDATIONS.—The Secretary shall include in the report under subsection (a) any recommendations the Secretary considers appropriate to improve the adjudication of claims for compensation based on military sexual trauma, including—

(1) recommendations for an appropriate standard of proof for such claims if the Secretary considers such recommendations advisable; and

(2) recommendations for legislative action, if necessary, to carry out such improvement.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ACTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL, OR AIR SERVICE.—The term ''active military, naval, or air service'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) COVERED MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION.—The term ''covered mental health condition'' means post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, or other mental health diagnosis that the Secretary determines to be related to military sexual trauma.

(3) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section, and shall include ''sexual harassment'' (as so specified).

SEC. 604. REPORTS ON CLAIMS FOR DISABILITIES INCURRED OR AGGRAVATED BY MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.

(a) REPORTS.—Not later than December 1, 2014, and each year thereafter through 2018, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the covered claims submitted to the Secretary during the previous fiscal year.

(b) ELEMENTS.—Each report under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) The number of covered claims submitted to or considered by the Secretary during the fiscal year covered by the report.

(2) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1), the number and percentage of such claims—

(A) submitted by each gender;

(B) that were approved, including the number and percentage of such approved claims submitted by each gender; and

(C) that were denied, including the number and percentage of such denied claims submitted by each gender.

(3) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1) that were approved, the number and percentage, listed by each gender, of claims assigned to each rating percentage of disability.

(4) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1) that were denied—

(A) the three most common reasons given by the Secretary under section 5104(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code, for such denials; and

(B) the number of denials that were based on the failure of a veteran to report for a medical examination.

(5) Of the covered claims under paragraph (1) that were resubmitted to the Secretary after denial in a previous adjudication—

(A) the number of such claims submitted to or considered by the Secretary during the fiscal year covered by the report;

(B) the number and percentage of such claims—

(i) submitted by each gender;

(ii) that were approved, including the number and percentage of such approved claims submitted by each gender; and

(iii) that were denied, including the number and percentage of such denied claims submitted by each gender;

(C) the number and percentage, listed by each gender, of claims assigned to each rating percentage of disability; and

(D) of such claims that were again denied—

(i) the three most common reasons given by the Secretary under section 5104(b)(1) of such title for such denials; and

(ii) the number of denials that were based on the failure of a veteran to report for a medical examination.

(6) The number of covered claims that, as of the end of the fiscal year covered by the report, are pending and, separately, the number of such claims on appeal.

(7) For the fiscal year covered by the report, the average number of days that covered claims take to complete beginning on the date on which the claim is submitted.

(c) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) ACTIVE MILITARY, NAVAL, OR AIR SERVICE.—The term ''active military, naval, or air service'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) COVERED CLAIMS.—The term ''covered claims'' means claims for disability compensation submitted to the Secretary based on post traumatic stress disorder alleged to have been incurred or aggravated by military sexual trauma.

(3) MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA.—The term ''military sexual trauma'' shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section, and shall include ''sexual harassment'' (as so specified).

Subtitle B—Claims for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation

SEC. 611. PROGRAM ON TREATMENT OF CERTAIN APPLICATIONS FOR DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION AS FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of expediting the treatment of a covered dependency and indemnity compensation claim.

(b) COVERED DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION CLAIMS.—For purposes of this section, a covered dependency and indemnity

compensation claim is a claim submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code, for which the claimant—

(1) applies for such compensation within one-year of the death of the veteran upon whose service the claim is based;

(2) was the dependent on the claim of a veteran who was receiving benefits for one or more service-connected conditions as of the date of death;

(3) submits a death certificate or other evidence with the claim indicating that the veteran's death was due to a service-connected or compensable disability; and

(4) in the case that the claimant is the spouse of the deceased veteran, certifies that he or she has not remarried since the date of the veteran's death.

(c) DURATION.—The program shall be carried out during the one-year period beginning on the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(d) LOCATIONS.—The program shall be carried out at the Pension Management Center of the Department of Veterans Affairs or such centers selected by the Secretary for purposes of the program.

(e) REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 270 days after the date on which the program is completed, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the program.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The number of covered dependency and indemnity compensation claims that were adjudicated under the program, disaggregated by the following:

(i) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the spouse of a deceased veteran.

(ii) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the child of a deceased veteran.

(iii) Claims in which the claimant claimed entitlement to compensation on the basis of the claimant's status as the parent of a deceased veteran.

(B) The number of covered dependency and indemnity compensation claims that were adjudicated under the program and for which compensation was not awarded, disaggregated by clauses (i) through (iii) of subparagraph (A).

(C) A comparison of the accuracy and timeliness of claims adjudicated under the program with claims submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code, that were not provided expeditious treatment under the program.

(D) The findings of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(E) Such recommendations as the Secretary may have for legislative or administrative action to improve the adjudication of claims submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 612. REPORT BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ON IMPROVING TIMELINESS AND ACCURACY OF ADMINISTRATION OF CLAIMS FOR DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION AND PENSION FOR SURVIVING SPOUSES AND CHILDREN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 455 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report with recommendations for legislative or administrative actions to improve the timeliness and accuracy with which the Secretary processes and adjudicates claims for compensation under chapter 13 of title 38, United States Code, and pension under sections 1541 and 1542 of such title.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

Subtitle C—Agency of Original Jurisdiction

SEC. 621. WORKING GROUP TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE WORK CREDIT AND WORK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS OF VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION IN AN ELECTRONIC ENVIRONMENT.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a working group to assess and develop recommendations for the improvement of the employee work credit and work management systems of the Veterans Benefits Administration in an electronic environment.

(b) COMPOSITION.—The working group shall be composed of the following:

(1) The Secretary or the Secretary's designee.

(2) Individuals selected by the Secretary from among employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who handle claims for compensation and pension benefits and are recommended to the Secretary by a labor organization for purposes of this section, including at least one of each of the following individuals:

(A) A veterans service representative.

(B) A rating veterans service representative.

(C) A decision review officer.

(3) Not fewer than three individuals selected by the Secretary to represent different organizations recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(4) Individuals selected by the Secretary—

(A) that are not employees of the Department; and

(B) that are experts in work credit and work management systems.

(c) DUTIES.—The duties of the working group are to assess and develop recommendations for the following:

(1) The improvement of the employee work credit and work management systems of the Veterans Benefits Administration in an electronic environment.

(2) A scientific, data based methodology to be used in revising the employee work credit system of the Department to improve the quality and quantity of work produced by employees of the Department.

(3) The improvement of the resource allocation model of the Veterans Benefits Administration, with a focus on the processing of claims in an electronic environment.

(4) A schedule by which the revisions referred to in paragraph (2) will be implemented by the Department.

(d) REVIEW AND INCORPORATION OF FINDINGS FROM PRIOR STUDY.—In carrying out its duties under subsection (c), the working group shall review the findings and conclusions of previous studies of the employee work credit and work management systems of the Veterans Benefits Administration.

(e) ROLE OF THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall consider the recommendations of the working group and implement such recommendations as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) INTERIM REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the establishment of the working group, the working group shall submit to Congress a report on the progress of the working group.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the establishment of the working group, the Secretary shall submit to Congress the methodology described in subsection (c)(2) and the schedule described in subsection (c)(4) that the Secretary has decided to implement pursuant to subsection (e).

(g) IMPLEMENTATION OF METHODOLOGY AND SCHEDULE.—After submitting the report under subsection (f), the Secretary shall take such actions as may be necessary to apply the methodology described in subsection (c)(2) and the schedule described in subsection (c)(4) that the Secretary has decided to implement pursuant to subsection (e).

SEC. 622. TASK FORCE ON RETENTION AND TRAINING OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CLAIMS PROCESSORS AND ADJUDICATORS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish a task force to assess retention and training of claims processors and adjudicators that are employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

(b) COMPOSITION.—The task force shall be composed of the following:

(1) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs or designee.

(2) The Director of the Office of Personnel Management or designee.

(3) The Commissioner of Social Security or designee.

(4) An individual selected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs who represents an organization recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

(5) Such other individuals selected by the Secretary who represent such other organizations and institutions as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(c) DURATION.—The task force established under subsection (a) shall terminate not later than two years after the date on which the task force is established under such subsection.

(d) DUTIES.—The duties of the task force are as follows:

(1) To identify key skills required by claims processors and adjudicators to perform the duties of claims processors and adjudicators in the various claims processing and adjudication positions throughout the Federal Government.

(2) To identify reasons for employee attrition from claims processing positions.

(3) To coordinate with educational institutions to develop training and programs of education for members of the Armed Forces to prepare such members for employment in claims processing and adjudication positions in the Federal Government.

(4) To identify and coordinate offices of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs located throughout the United States to provide information about, and promotion of, available claims processing positions to members of the Armed Forces transitioning to civilian life and to veterans with disabilities.

(5) To establish performance measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the task force.

(6) Not later than one year after the date of the establishment of the task force, to develop a Government-wide strategic and operational plan for promoting employment of veterans in claims processing positions in the Federal Government.

(7) To establish performance measures to assess the plan developed under paragraph (6), to assess the implementation of such plan, and to revise such plan as the task force considers appropriate.

(e) REPORTS.—

(1) SUBMITTAL OF PLAN.—Not later than one year after the date of the establishment of

the task force, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the plan developed by the task force under subsection (d)(6).

(2) ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION.—Not later than 120 days after the termination of the task force, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report that assesses the implementation of the plan developed by the task force under subsection (d)(6).

SEC. 623. REPORTS ON REQUESTS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR RECORDS OF OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES.

(a) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 180 days thereafter through the date that is 910 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the attempts of the Department of Veterans Affairs to obtain records necessary to adjudicate claims for benefits from another department or agency of the Federal Government during the 180-day period ending on the date of such report.

(b) ELEMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each report shall set forth the following:

(A) For the period covered by such report, the following:

(i) The total number of requests made by the Department.

(ii) The types of records requested.

(iii) The number of requests made before the receipt of each record.

(iv) The amount of time between the initial request for each record and the receipt of each record.

(v) The number of occurrences of the receipt of a record after the adjudication of the claim for which the record was sought.

(vi) A description of the efforts of the Secretary to expedite the delivery of records to the Department from other departments and agencies of the Federal Government.

(B) Such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate in light of such report.

(2) PRESENTATION.—The information in a report under clause (i) through (v) of paragraph (1)(A) shall be set forth separately for each department and agency of the Federal Government covered by such report.

SEC. 624. RECOGNITION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF INDIAN TRIBES IN THE PREPARATION, PRESENTATION, AND PROSECUTION OF CLAIMS UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 5902(a)(1) is amended by inserting ", including Indian tribes (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b))" after "as the Secretary may approve".

SEC. 625. PROGRAM ON PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS IN IMPROVING QUALITY OF CLAIMS FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION SUBMITTED TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of entering into memoranda of understanding with local governments and tribal organizations—

(1) to improve the quality of claims submitted to the Secretary for compensation under chapter 11 of title 38, United States Code, and pension under chapter 15 of such title; and

(2) to provide assistance to veterans who may be eligible for such compensation or pension in submitting such claims.

(b) MINIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—In carrying out the program required by subsection (a), the Secretary shall enter into, or maintain existing, memoranda of understanding with at least—

(1) two tribal organizations; and

(2) 10 State or local governments.

(c) DURATION.—The program shall be carried out during the two-year period beginning on the date of the commencement of the program.

(d) REPORT.—

(1) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date of the commencement of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that includes the following:

(A) A description of the implementation and operation of the program, including a description of outreach conducted by the Secretary to tribal organizations and State and local governments.

(B) An evaluation of the program, including the total number of memoranda of understanding entered into or maintained by the Secretary.

(2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days after the termination of the program, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report that includes the following:

(A) A description of the implementation and operation of the program, including a description of outreach conducted by the Secretary to tribal organizations and State and local governments.

(B) An evaluation of the program, including the total number of memoranda of understanding entered into or maintained by the Secretary.

(C) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(D) Such recommendations for continuation or expansion of the program as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(e) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—In this section, the term "tribal organization" has the meaning given that term in section 3765 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 626. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NOTICE OF AVERAGE TIMES FOR PROCESSING COMPENSATION CLAIMS.

(a) PUBLIC NOTICE.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, to the extent practicable, post the information described in subsection (b)—

(1) in physical locations, such as Regional Offices or other claims in-take facilities, that the Secretary considers appropriate;

(2) on the Internet website of the Department; and

(3) through other mediums or using such other methods, including collaboration with veterans service organizations, as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(b) INFORMATION DESCRIBED.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The information described in this subsection is the average processing time of the claims described in paragraph (2).

(2) CLAIMS DESCRIBED.—The claims described in this paragraph are each of the following types of claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs:

(A) A fully developed claim.

(B) A claim that is not fully developed.

(3) UPDATE OF INFORMATION.—The information described in this subsection shall be updated not less frequently than once each fiscal quarter.

(c) EXPIRATION OF REQUIREMENTS.—The requirements of subsection (a) shall expire on December 31, 2015.

(d) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION DEFINED.—In this section, the term "veterans service organization" means an organization recognized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 627. QUARTERLY REPORTS ON PROGRESS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IN ELIMINATING BACKLOG OF CLAIMS FOR COMPENSATION THAT HAVE NOT BEEN ADJUDICATED.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less frequently than quarterly thereafter through calendar year 2015, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the backlog of claims filed with the Department of Veterans Affairs for compensation that have not been adjudicated by the Department.

(b) CONTENTS.—Each report submitted under subsection (a) shall include the following:

(1) For each month through calendar year 2015, a projection of the following:

(A) The number of claims completed.

(B) The number of claims received.

(C) The number of claims on backlog at the end of the month.

(D) The number of claims pending at the end of the month.

(E) The number of appeals pending at the end of the month.

(F) A description of the status of the implementation of initiatives carried out by the Secretary to address the backlog, including the expected impact of those initiatives on accuracy and timeliness of adjudication of claims.

(2) For each quarter through calendar year 2015, a projection of the average accuracy of disability determinations for compensation claims that require a disability rating (or disability decision).

(3) For each month during the most recently completed quarter, the following:

(A) The number of claims completed.

(B) The number of claims received.

(C) The number of claims on backlog at the end of the month.

(D) The number of claims pending at the end of the month.

(E) The number of appeals pending at the end of the month.

(F) A description of the status of the implementation of initiatives carried out by the Secretary to address the backlog, including the impact of those initiatives on accuracy and timeliness of adjudication of claims.

(G) An assessment of the accuracy of disability determinations for compensation claims that require a disability rating (or disability decision).

(4) For the most recently completed quarter—

(A) the number of cases physically received at the Board of Veterans' Appeals and docketed;

(B) the number of cases pending at the Board of Veterans' Appeals at the end of the quarter;

(C) the number of cases physically at the Board of Veterans' Appeals at the end of the quarter;

(D) the number of notices of disagreement and appeals filed to the agency of original jurisdiction referred to in section 7105(b)(1) of title 38, United States Code; and

(E) the number of decisions made by the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the percentage of such decisions that were allowed, remanded, denied, or otherwise disposed of.

(c) AVAILABILITY TO PUBLIC.—The Secretary shall make each report submitted under subsection (a) available to the public.

(d) ON BACKLOG AND PENDING DEFINED.—In this section, the terms "on backlog" and

''pending'', with respect to a claim for compensation received by the Secretary, shall have the meaning specified by the Secretary for purposes of this section.

SEC. 628. REPORTS ON USE OF EXISTING AUTHORITIES TO EXPEDITE BENEFITS DECISIONS.

(a) REPORT ON CURRENT USE OF TEMPORARY, INTERMEDIATE, AND PROVISIONAL RATING DECISIONS.—

(1) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the use of temporary, intermediate, and provisional rating decisions to expedite the benefits decisions of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) REPORT ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) With respect to temporary and intermediate rating decisions, the following:

(i) The number of temporary and intermediate rating decisions issued by the Department during each of fiscal years 2011, 2012, and 2013.

(ii) A description of any reasons or obstacles that prevent use of existing authorities to issue temporary or intermediate rating decisions.

(iii) A description of the Quick Pay Disability initiative, including the rationale for not expanding the initiative beyond pilot program status.

(B) With respect to provisional rating decisions, the following:

(i) The number of provisional rating decisions issued by the Department during the oldest claims first initiative.

(ii) Of the provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative—

(I) the number of such decisions that involved a claim granted;

(II) the number of such decisions that involved a claim denied; and

(III) the number of such decisions that involved a claim granted in part or a claim denied in part.

(iii) A statement of the most common reasons claims were not granted earlier under the oldest claims first initiative when there was sufficient evidence to render an award of benefits in the provisional rating decision.

(iv) The average number of days to issue a provisional rating decision under the oldest claims first initiative.

(v) Of the total number of decisions that were completed under the oldest claims first initiative—

(I) the number that were Category 1 claims and received a final rating decision; and

(II) the number that were Category 2 claims and received a provisional rating decision.

(vi) The number of rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first imitative that involved a brokered claim, set forth by number of such claims by Regional Office of the Department, including—

(I) the number of brokered claims received by each Regional Office; and

(II) the number of brokered claims issued by each Regional Office.

(vii) The number of provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative with respect to which the veteran requested that the provisional decision become final in order to appeal.

(viii) The number of provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative with respect to which the veteran requested an appeal after the expiration of the 1-year period beginning on the date of notification of the provisional rating decision.

(ix) An assessment of the accuracy of provisional rating decisions issued during the oldest claims first initiative, set forth by Category 1 claims and Category 2 claims.

(C) Such other matters as the Secretary considers appropriate for purposes of the report.

(3) SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION.—If the Secretary continues to obtain information on rating decisions under clauses (vii) and (viii) of paragraph (2)(B) after the date of the submittal of the report required by paragraph (1), the Secretary shall submit to the committees of Congress referred to in paragraph (1) a report on such information that supplements the information on such clauses in the report under paragraph (1) when the Secretary completes accumulation of such information.

(b) PLAN FOR INCREASE IN USE OF TEMPORARY OR INTERMEDIATE RATING DECISIONS.—

(1) REPORT ON PLAN REQUIRED.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report setting forth a plan to increase the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions to expedite benefit decisions of the Department when the record contains sufficient evidence to grant any claim at issue, including service connection.

(2) PLAN ELEMENTS.—The plan required under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) Mechanisms to overcome obstacles to the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions, including mechanisms (such as upgrades) to assure the ability of the Veterans Benefits Management System to facilitate the issuance of temporary or intermediate rating decisions.

(B) Mechanisms to ensure that appropriate claimant populations, such as claimants who file complex or multi-issue disability compensation claims, benefit from the availability of temporary or intermediate rating decisions.

(C) Mechanisms to provide for the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions, including mechanisms to resolve whether a request by a claimant or claimant representative should trigger use of a temporary or intermediate rating decision depending on the circumstances of the claimant.

(D) Mechanisms to prevent the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions in lieu of a final rating decision when a final rating decision could be made with little or no additional claim development.

(E) Such recommendations for legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate to increase the use of temporary or intermediate rating decisions to expedite benefit decisions of the Department.

SEC. 629. REPORTS ON DEPARTMENT DISABILITY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS AND PREVENTION OF UNNECESSARY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS.

(a) REPORT ON DISABILITY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the furnishing of general medical and specialty medical examinations by the Department of Veterans Affairs for purposes of adjudicating claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The number of general medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary.

(B) The number of general medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating a claim in which a comprehensive joint examination was conducted, but for which no disability relating to a joint, bone, or muscle had been asserted as an issue in the claim.

(C) The number of specialty medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating a claim.

(D) The number of specialty medical examinations furnished by the Department during the period of fiscal years 2009 through 2012 for purposes of adjudicating a claim in which one or more joint examinations were conducted.

(E) A summary with citations to any medical and scientific studies that provide a basis for determining that three repetitions is adequate to determine the effect of repetitive use on functional impairments.

(F) The names of all examination reports, including general medical examinations and Disability Benefits Questionnaires, used for evaluation of compensation and pension disability claims which require measurement of repeated ranges of motion testing and the number of examinations requiring such measurements which were conducted in fiscal year 2012.

(G) The average amount of time taken by an individual conducting a medical examination to perform the three repetitions of movement of each joint.

(H) A discussion of whether there are more efficient and effective scientifically reliable methods of testing for functional loss on repetitive use of an extremity other than the three time repetition currently used by the Department.

(I) Recommendations as to the continuation of the practice of measuring functional impairment by using three repetitions of movement of each joint during the examination as a criteria for evaluating the effect of repetitive motion on functional impairment with supporting rationale.

(b) REPORT AND PLAN TO PREVENT THE ORDERING OF UNNECESSARY MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the efforts of the Secretary in reducing the necessity for in-person disability examinations and other efforts to comply with the provisions of section 5125 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) Criteria used by the Secretary to determine if a claim is eligible for the Acceptable Clinical Evidence initiative.

(B) The number of claims determined to be eligible for the Acceptable Clinical Evidence initiative during the period beginning on the date of the initiation of the initiative and ending on the date of the enactment of this Act, disaggregated—

(i) by fiscal year; and

(ii) by claims determined eligible based in whole or in part on medical evidence provided by a private health care provider.

(C) The total number of claims determined to be eligible for the Acceptable Clinical Evidence initiative that required an employee of the Department to supplement the evidence

with information obtained during a telephone interview with a claimant or health care provider.

(D) Information on any other initiatives or efforts, including disability benefits questionnaires, of the Department to further encourage the use of medical evidence provided by a private health care provider and reliance upon reports of a medical examination administered by a private physician if the report is sufficiently complete to be adequate for the purposes of adjudicating a claim.

(E) A plan—

(i) to measure, track, and prevent the ordering of unnecessary medical examinations when the provision by a claimant of a medical examination administered by a private physician in support of a claim for benefits under chapter 11 or 15 of title 38, United States Code, is adequate for the purpose of making a decision on that claim; and

(ii) that includes the actions the Secretary will take to eliminate any request by the Department for a medical examination in the case of a claim for benefits under chapter 11 or 15 of such title in support of which a claimant submits medical evidence or a medical opinion provided by a private health care provider that is competent, credible, probative, and otherwise adequate for purposes of making a decision on that claim.

Subtitle D—Board of Veterans' Appeals and Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims

SEC. 631. TREATMENT OF CERTAIN MISFILED DOCUMENTS AS A NOTICE OF APPEAL TO THE COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS.

Section 7266 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(e)(1) If a person adversely affected by a final decision of the Board, who has not filed a notice of appeal with the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims under subsection (a), misfiles a document with the Board or the agency of original jurisdiction referred to in section 7105(b)(1) of this title that expresses disagreement with such decision and a clear intent to seek review of such decision by the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, not later than 120 days after the date of such decision, such document shall be treated as timely filed under subsection (a).

''(2) The treatment of misfiled documents under paragraph (1) does not limit equitable relief that may be otherwise available to a person described in that paragraph.''.

SEC. 632. DETERMINATION OF MANNER OF APPEARANCE FOR HEARINGS BEFORE BOARD OF VETERANS' APPEALS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 7107 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1), by striking ''in subsection (f)'' and inserting ''in subsection (g)'';

(2) by redesignating subsection (f) as subsection (g); and

(3) by striking subsections (d) and (e) and inserting the following new subsections:

''(d)(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a hearing before the Board shall be conducted through picture and voice transmission, by electronic or other means, in such a manner that the appellant is not present in the same location as the members of the Board during the hearing.

''(2)(A) A hearing before the Board shall be conducted in person upon the request of an appellant.

''(B) In the absence of a request under subparagraph (A), a hearing before the Board may also be conducted in person as the Board considers appropriate.

''(e)(1) In a case in which a hearing before the Board is to be held as described in subsection (d)(1), the Secretary shall provide suitable facilities and equipment to the Board or other components of the Department to enable an appellant located at an appropriate facility within the area served by a regional office to participate as so described.

''(2) Any hearing conducted as described in subsection (d)(1) shall be conducted in the same manner as, and shall be considered the equivalent of, a personal hearing.

''(f)(1) In a case in which a hearing before the Board is to be held as described in subsection (d)(2), the appellant may request that the hearing be held at the principal location of the Board or at a facility of the Department located within the area served by a regional office of the Department.

''(2) A hearing to be held within an area served by a regional office of the Department shall (except as provided in paragraph (3)) be scheduled to be held in accordance with the place of the case on the docket under subsection (a) relative to other cases on the docket for which hearings are scheduled to be held within that area.

''(3) A hearing to be held within an area served by a regional office of the Department may, for cause shown, be advanced on motion for an earlier hearing. Any such motion shall set forth succinctly the grounds upon which the motion is based. Such a motion may be granted only—

''(A) if the case involves interpretation of law of general application affecting other claims;

''(B) if the appellant is seriously ill or is under severe financial hardship; or

''(C) for other sufficient cause shown.''.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to cases received by the Board of Veterans' Appeals pursuant to notices of disagreement submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE VII—OUTREACH MATTERS

SEC. 701. PROGRAM TO INCREASE COORDINATION OF OUTREACH EFFORTS BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

(a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall carry out a program to assess the feasibility and advisability of using State and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations—

(1) to increase awareness of veterans regarding benefits and services for veterans; and

(2) to improve coordination of outreach activities regarding such benefits and services between the Secretary and Federal, State, and local government and nonprofit providers of health care and benefit services for veterans.

(b) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the program for a two-year period.

(c) GRANTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry out the program through the competitive award of grants to State and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations—

(A) to increase the awareness of veterans regarding benefits and services for veterans; and

(B) to improve coordination of outreach activities regarding such benefits and services between the Secretary and Federal, State, and local government and nonprofit providers of health care and benefit services for veterans.

(2) APPLICATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—A State or local government agency or nonprofit organization seeking a grant under the program shall submit to the Secretary an application therefor in such form and in such manner as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(B) ELEMENTS.—Each application submitted under subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

(i) A description of the consultations, if any, with the Department of Veterans Affairs in the development of any proposal under the application.

(ii) A description of the project for which the applicant is seeking a grant under the program, including a plan to coordinate under the program, to the greatest extent possible, the outreach activities of Federal, State, and local government agencies that provide health care, benefits, and services for veterans and nonprofit organizations that provide such care, benefits, and services to enhance the awareness and availability of such care, benefits, and services.

(iii) An agreement to report to the Secretary standardized data and other performance measures necessary for the Secretary to evaluate the program and to facilitate evaluation of projects for which grants are awarded under the program.

(iv) Such other information as the Secretary may require.

(3) CONSIDERATIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—In awarding grants under the program to carry out projects, the Secretary shall consider—

(i) where the projects will be carried out and which populations are targeted; and

(ii) the likelihood that each potential grantee will successfully carry out the grant proposal.

(B) CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING LOCATION AND TARGET POPULATION.—In taking the matters specified in subparagraph (A)(ii) into consideration, the Secretary shall consider in particular the advisability of awarding grants for projects—

(i) carried out in areas with populations that have a high proportion of veteran representation;

(ii) carried out in a variety of geographic areas, including urban, rural, and highly rural areas; and

(iii) that target a variety of veteran populations, including racial and ethnic minorities, low-income populations, and older populations.

(4) USE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary shall establish appropriate uses of grant amounts received under the program.

(5) OVERSIGHT OF USE OF FUNDS.—The Secretary shall establish appropriate mechanisms for oversight of the use of grant amounts received under the program, including the evidence grantees must submit to demonstrate use of grant amounts and procedures for the recovery of grant amounts that were improperly used.

(6) LIMITATION.—In a fiscal year, not more than 20 percent of all grant amounts awarded in that fiscal year may be awarded to a single State entity.

(d) STATE MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—The Secretary may not make a grant to a State under subsection (c) unless that State agrees that, with respect to the costs to be incurred by the State in carrying out the program or projects for which the grant was awarded, the State will make available (directly or through donations from public or private entities) non-Federal contributions in an amount equal to 50 percent of Federal funds provided under the grant.

(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is hereby authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section the following:

(1) $2,500,000 for fiscal year 2015.

(2) $2,500,000 for fiscal year 2016.

(f) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 120 days after the completion of the first calendar year beginning after the date of the commencement of the program, and not less frequently than once every year thereafter for the duration of the program, the Secretary shall submit to Congress a report evaluating

the program and the projects supported by grants awarded under the program.

(2) ELEMENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) The findings and conclusions of the Secretary with respect to the program.

(B) An assessment of the benefit to veterans of the program.

(C) The performance measures used by the Secretary for purposes of the program and data showing the performance of grantees under the program under such measures.

(D) The recommendations of the Secretary as to the feasibility and advisability of continuing or expanding or modifying the program.

(g) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 702. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND STATES ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 is amended by inserting after section 6306 the following new section:

"§ 6306A. Cooperative agreements with States

''(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter into cooperative agreements and arrangements with various State agencies and State departments to carry out this chapter and to otherwise carry out, coordinate, improve, or enhance outreach activities of the Department and the States.

''(b) REPORT.—The Secretary shall include in each report submitted under section 6308 of this title a description of the agreements and arrangements entered into by the Secretary under subsection (a).''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 6306 the following new item:

''6306A. Cooperative agreements with States.''.

SEC. 703. ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall establish an advisory committee on outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—The advisory committee shall be composed of individuals selected by the Secretary from among the following:

(1) To the maximum extent practicable, individuals who are eminent in their respective fields of public relations.

(2) Representatives of organizations with offices that focus on communications and distribute messages through major media news outlets and social media.

(3) To the maximum extent practicable, individuals with experience communicating financial results and business strategy for purposes of shaping a confident brand image.

(4) To the maximum extent practicable, individuals with experience with consumer and lifestyle imaging and creating publicity for a particular product or service.

(5) To the maximum extent practicable, veterans who have experience in press and public relations.

(c) DUTIES.—The advisory committee shall advise the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs—

(1) to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs is strategically and effectively—

(A) engaging the public and Department stakeholders to increase awareness nationally regarding all benefits and services furnished by the Department;

(B) explaining new or changing policies of the Department;

(C) improving the image and reputation of the Department; and

(D) coordinating and collaborating with national community-based organizations, nonprofits, and State and local government agencies;

(2) to assist the Secretary in conducting such other press or public relations activities relating to outreach activities of the Department as the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs consider appropriate; and

(3) to ensure coordination and collaboration on efforts within the Department for the development, implementation, and review of local outreach with respect to benefits that include the following:

(A) Compensation and pension benefits.

(B) Insurance benefits.

(C) Burial and memorial benefits.

(D) Education benefits.

(E) Vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits.

(F) Readjustment counseling benefits.

(G) Loan guarantee benefits.

(H) Such other benefits as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(d) LOCATION OF MEETINGS.—Each meeting of the advisory committee shall take place at a location that is property of the Department and shall, to the maximum extent practicable, use teleconference technology.

(e) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall consult with and seek the advice of the advisory committee not less frequently than quarterly on matters relating to the duties of the advisory committee under subsection (c).

(f) REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not less frequently than once every 90 days for the first year and semiannually thereafter, the advisory committee shall submit to Congress and to the Secretary a report on outreach activities of the Department.

(2) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include such recommendations for legislative and administrative action as the advisory committee considers appropriate to improve the press and public relations of the Department relating to outreach.

(g) TERMINATION.—The advisory committee shall terminate on October 1, 2015, and the requirements and authorities under this section shall terminate on such date.

(h) OUTREACH DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''outreach'' has the meaning given the term in section 6301 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 704. ADVISORY BOARDS ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS RELATING TO HEALTH CARE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For each entity described in paragraph (2), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, acting through the director of that entity, establish not later than 180 days after the effective date specified in subsection (h) an advisory board at that entity on matters relating to outreach activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs at that entity.

(2) ENTITY DESCRIBED.—An entity described in this paragraph is—

(A) a healthcare system of the Department; or

(B) a Veterans Integrated System Network, if such Veterans Integrated System Network does not contain a healthcare system.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) shall be, to the maximum extent practicable, composed of individuals selected by the Secretary from among the following:

(A) Individuals who are eminent in their respective fields of public relations.

(B) Representatives of organizations with offices that focus on communications and distribute messages through major media news outlets and social media.

(C) Individuals with experience communicating financial results and business strategy for purposes of shaping a confident brand image.

(D) Individuals with experience with consumer and lifestyle imaging and creating publicity for a particular product or service.

(E) Employees of the Department who are involved in press and public relations strategy for an entity described in subsection (a)(2).

(F) To the maximum extent practicable, veterans who have experience in press and public relations.

(2) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.—The participation of an individual selected under paragraph (1) shall be at the election of the individual.

(c) DUTIES.—Each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) at an entity described in subsection (a)(2) shall advise the Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs—

(1) to ensure that the Department of Veterans Affairs is strategically and effectively—

(A) engaging the public and Department stakeholders to increase awareness nationally regarding benefits and services furnished by the Department;

(B) explaining new or changing policies of the Department;

(C) improving the image and reputation of the Department;

(D) coordinating and collaborating with national community-based organizations, nonprofits, and State and local government agencies; and

(E) coordinating and collaborating on efforts within the Department for the development, implementation, and review of local outreach with respect to benefits that include—

(i) compensation and pension benefits;

(ii) insurance benefits;

(iii) burial and memorial benefits;

(iv) education benefits;

(v) vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits;

(vi) readjustment counseling benefits;

(vii) loan guarantee benefits; and

(viii) such other benefits as the Secretary considers appropriate; and

(2) to assist the director of that entity in conducting such other press or public relations activities relating to outreach activities of the Department as that advisory board considers appropriate.

(d) MEETING LOCATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—If teleconference technology is not used, meetings of each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) shall be held at a location that is property of the Department.

(2) TELECONFERENCE TECHNOLOGY.—Each advisory board shall use, to the maximum extent practicable, teleconference technology.

(e) CONSULTATION.—Each director of an entity described in subsection (a)(2) shall consult with and seek the advice of the advisory board established at such entity not less frequently than once every two months on matters relating to the duties of the advisory board under subsection (c).

(f) ANNUAL REPORTS.—Not less frequently than each year, each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) shall submit to the Secretary a report with such information as may be beneficial to the Secretary in preparing the reports required by section 6308 of title 38, United States Code.

(g) TERMINATION.—Each advisory board established under subsection (a)(1) and the authorities and requirements of this section shall terminate three years after the effective date specified in subsection (h).

(h) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 705. MODIFICATION OF REQUIREMENT FOR PERIODIC REPORTS TO CONGRESS ON OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 6308 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking ''even-numbered''; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking ''biennial'';

(B) in paragraph (2), by inserting ''for legislative and administrative action'' after ''Recommendations''; and

(C) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(3) Recommendations that such administrative actions as may be taken—

''(A) to maximize resources for outreach activities of the Department; and

''(B) to focus outreach efforts on activities that are proven to be more effective.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The heading for section 6308 is amended by striking ''**Biennial**'' and inserting ''**Annual**''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 is amended by striking the item relating to section 6308 and inserting the following new item:

''6308. Annual report to Congress.''.

SEC. 706. BUDGET TRANSPARENCY FOR OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 63 is amended by inserting after section 6308 the following new section:

''§ 6309. Budget transparency

''(a) BUDGET REQUIREMENTS.—In the budget justification materials submitted to Congress in support of the Department budget for a fiscal year (as submitted with the budget of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31), the Secretary shall include a separate statement of the amount requested for such fiscal year for activities of the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs as follows:

''(1) For outreach activities of the Department in aggregate.

''(2) For outreach activities of each element of the Department specified in subsection (b)(1).

''(b) PROCEDURES FOR EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION.—(1) Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of the Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act of 2014, the Secretary shall establish and maintain procedures for the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs to ensure the effective coordination and collaboration of outreach activities of the Department between and among the following:

''(A) Office of the Secretary.

''(B) Veterans Health Administration.

''(C) Veterans Benefits Administration.

''(D) National Cemetery Administration.

''(2) The Secretary shall—

''(A) beginning after the date on which the Secretary establishes procedures under paragraph (1), not less frequently than once every two years conduct a review of the procedures established and maintained under paragraph (1) to ensure that such procedures meet the requirements of such paragraph;

''(B) make such modifications to such procedures as the Secretary considers appropriate based upon reviews conducted under subparagraph (A) in order to better meet such requirements; and

''(C) not later than 45 days after completing a review under subparagraph (A), submit to Congress a report on the findings of such review.''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 63 is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 6308 the following new item:

''6309. Budget transparency.''.

TITLE VIII—OTHER VETERANS MATTERS

SEC. 801. REPEAL OF CERTAIN REDUCTIONS MADE BY BIPARTISAN BUDGET ACT OF 2013.

(a) ADJUSTMENT OF RETIREMENT PAY.—Section 403 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 (Public Law 113–67) is repealed as of the date of the enactment of such Act.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) APPLICABILITY TO DISABILITY AND SURVIVOR BENEFITS.—Title X of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2014 (division C of Public Law 113–76) is repealed.

(2) APPLICABILITY TO MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO JOINED AFTER JANUARY 1, 2014.—Section 2 of Public Law 113–82 is repealed.

SEC. 802. CONSIDERATION BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OF RESOURCES DISPOSED OF FOR LESS THAN FAIR MARKET VALUE BY INDIVIDUALS APPLYING FOR PENSION.

(a) VETERANS.—Section 1522 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The Secretary''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) If a veteran otherwise eligible for payment of pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or the spouse of such veteran disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue the payment of pension to such veteran under section 1513 or 1521 of this title, as the case may be, for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the veteran or, if the veteran has a spouse, the corpus of the estates of the veteran and of the veteran's spouse, that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the veteran or spouse had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the veteran's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the veteran or, if the veteran has a spouse, the corpus of the estates of the veteran and of the veteran's spouse, that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the veteran's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the veteran applies for pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or, if later, the date on which the veteran (or the spouse of the veteran) disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this subparagraph shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of covered resources so disposed of by the veteran (or the spouse of the veteran) on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the veteran's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of monthly pension that is payable to a veteran under section 1513 or 1521 of this title, including the maximum amount of increased pension payable under such sections on account of family members, but not including any amount of pension payable under such sections because a veteran is in need of regular aid and attendance or is permanently housebound,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The Secretary''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) If a veteran otherwise eligible for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child, the spouse of the veteran, or the child disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue payment of such increased pension for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the veteran, the spouse of the veteran, or the child had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the veteran applies for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child or, if later, the date on which the veteran, the spouse of the veteran, or the child disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this subparagraph shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the veteran, the spouse of the veteran, or the child on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the child's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of increased monthly pension that is payable to a veteran under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c)(1)(A) The Secretary shall not deny or discontinue payment of pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) of this section to the disposal of resources by an individual—

''(i) if—

''(I) a satisfactory showing is made to the Secretary (in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary) that all resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources; or

''(II) the Secretary determines, under procedures established by the Secretary in accordance with subparagraph (B), that the denial or discontinuance of payment would work an undue hardship; or

''(ii) to the extent that any portion of the resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources.

''(B) Undue hardship would be worked by the denial or discontinuance of payment for purposes of subparagraph (A)(i)(II) if the denial or discontinuance of payment would deprive the individual during the period of denial or discontinuance—

''(i) of medical care such that the individual's life or health would be endangered;

''(ii) of necessary food or clothing, or other necessities of life; or

''(iii) on such other basis as the Secretary shall specify in the procedures required by subparagraph (A)(i)(II).

''(C) If payment of pension or increased pension that would otherwise be denied or discontinued by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2) is denied or discontinued only in part by reason of the return of resources as described in subparagraph (A)(ii), the period of the denial or discontinuance as determined pursuant to subparagraph (E) of subsection (a)(2) or (b)(2), as applicable, shall be recalculated to take into account such return of resources.

''(2) At the time a veteran applies for pension under section 1513 or 1521 of this title or increased pension under subsection (c), (d), (e), or (f) of section 1521 of this title on account of a child, and at such other times as the Secretary considers appropriate, the Secretary shall—

''(A) inform such veteran of the provisions of subsections (a)(2) and (b)(2) providing for a period of ineligibility for payment of pension under such sections for individuals who make certain dispositions of resources for less than fair market value, including the exception for hardship from such period of ineligibility;

''(B) obtain from such veteran information which may be used in determining whether or not a period of ineligibility for such payments would be required by reason of such subsections; and

''(C) provide such veteran a timely process for determining whether or not the exception for hardship shall apply to such veteran.''.

(b) SURVIVING SPOUSES AND CHILDREN.—Section 1543 is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (3);

(B) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2)(A) If a surviving spouse otherwise eligible for payment of pension under section 1541 of this title disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue the payment of pension to such surviving spouse under section 1541 of this title for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the surviving spouse that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the surviving spouse had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the surviving spouse's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the surviving spouse that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the surviving spouse's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the surviving spouse applies for pension under section 1541 of this title or, if later, the date on which the surviving spouse disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this subparagraph shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the surviving spouse on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the surviving spouse's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of monthly pension that is payable to a surviving spouse under section 1541 of this title, including the maximum amount of increased pension payable under such section on account of a child, but not including any amount of pension payable under such section because a surviving spouse is in need of regular aid and attendance or is permanently housebound,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.'';

(C) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(4)(A) If a surviving spouse otherwise eligible for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child or the child disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue payment of such increased pension for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a part of the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the surviving spouse or the child had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate of the child that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the surviving spouse applies for payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child or, if later, the date on which the surviving spouse (or the child) disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this subparagraph is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this clause shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the surviving spouse (or the child) on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the child's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of increased monthly pension that is payable to a surviving spouse under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.'';

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) by inserting ''(1)'' before ''The Secretary''; and

(B) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(2)(A) If a child otherwise eligible for payment of pension under section 1542 of this title or any person with whom such child is residing who is legally responsible for such child's support disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i), the Secretary shall deny or discontinue the payment of pension to such child under section 1542 of this title for months during the period beginning on the date described in subparagraph (D) and equal to the number of months calculated as provided in subparagraph (E).

''(B)(i) For purposes of this paragraph, a covered resource is any resource that was a

part of the corpus of the estate of the child or the corpus of the estate of any person with whom such child is residing who is legally responsible for such child's support that the Secretary considers that under all the circumstances, if the child or person had not disposed of such resource, it would be reasonable that the resource (or some portion of the resource) be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(ii) For purposes of this paragraph, the Secretary may consider, in accordance with regulations the Secretary shall prescribe, a transfer of an asset (including a transfer of an asset to an annuity, trust, or other financial instrument or investment) a disposal of a covered resource for less than fair market value if such transfer reduces the amount in the corpus of the estate described in clause (i) that the Secretary considers, under all the circumstances, would be reasonable to be consumed for the child's maintenance.

''(C)(i) The look-back date described in this clause is a date that is 36 months before the date described in clause (ii).

''(ii) The date described in this clause is the date on which the child applies for pension under section 1542 of this title or, if later, the date on which the child (or person described in subparagraph (B)) disposes of covered resources for less than fair market value.

''(D) The date described in this clause is the first day of the first month in or after which covered resources were disposed of for less than fair market value and which does not occur in any other period of ineligibility under this paragraph.

''(E) The number of months calculated under this clause shall be equal to—

''(i) the total, cumulative uncompensated value of the portion of the covered resources so disposed of by the child (or person described in subparagraph (B)) on or after the look-back date described in subparagraph (C)(i) that the Secretary determines would reasonably have been consumed for the child's maintenance; divided by

''(ii) the maximum amount of monthly pension that is payable to a child under section 1542 of this title,

rounded down, in the case of any fraction, to the nearest whole number, but shall not in any case exceed 36 months.''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new subsection:

''(c)(1)(A) The Secretary shall not deny or discontinue payment of pension under section 1541 or 1542 of this title or payment of increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2), (a)(4), or (b)(2) of this section to the disposal of resources by an individual—

''(i) if—

''(I) a satisfactory showing is made to the Secretary (in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary) that all resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources; or

''(II) the Secretary determines, under procedures established by the Secretary in accordance with subparagraph (B), that the denial or discontinuance of payment would work an undue hardship; or

''(ii) to the extent that any portion of the resources disposed of for less than fair market value have been returned to the individual who disposed of the resources.

''(B) Undue hardship would be worked by the denial or discontinuance of payment for purposes of subparagraph (A)(i)(II) if the denial or discontinuance of payment would deprive the individual during the period of denial or discontinuance—

''(i) of medical care such that the individual's life or health would be endangered;

''(ii) of necessary food or clothing, or other necessities of life; or

''(iii) on such other basis as the Secretary shall specify in the procedures required by subparagraph (A)(i)(II).

''(C) If payment of pension or increased pension that would otherwise be denied or discontinued by reason of the application of subsection (a)(2), (a)(4), or (b)(2) is denied or discontinued only in part by reason of the return of resources as described in subparagraph (A)(ii), the period of the denial or discontinuance as determined pursuant to subparagraph (E) of subsection (a)(2), (a)(4), or (b)(2), as applicable, shall be recalculated to take into account such return of resources.

''(2) At the time a surviving spouse or child applies for pension under section 1541 or 1542 of this title or increased pension under subsection (c), (d), or (e) of section 1541 of this title on account of a child, and at such other times as the Secretary considers appropriate, the Secretary shall—

''(A) inform such surviving spouse or child of the provisions of subsections (a)(2), (a)(4), and (b)(2), as applicable, providing for a period of ineligibility for payment of pension or increased pension under such sections for individuals who make certain dispositions of resources for less than fair market value, including the exception for hardship from such period of ineligibility;

''(B) obtain from such surviving spouse or child information which may be used in determining whether or not a period of ineligibility for such payments would be required by reason of such subsections; and

''(C) provide such surviving spouse or child a timely process for determining whether or not the exception for hardship shall apply to such surviving spouse or child.''.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Subsections (a)(2), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1522 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and subsections (a)(2), (a)(4), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1543 of such title, as added by subsection (b), shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act and shall apply with respect to payments of pension and increased pension applied for after such date and to payments of pension and increased pension for which eligibility is redetermined after such date, except that no reduction in pension shall be made under such subsections because of any disposal of covered resources made before such date.

(d) ANNUAL REPORTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 30 months after the date of the enactment of this Act and not less frequently than once each year thereafter through 2018, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on the administration of subsections (a)(2), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1522 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), and subsections (a)(2), (a)(4), (b)(2), and (c) of section 1543 of such title, as added by subsection (b), during the most recent 12-month period.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include the following, for the period covered by the report:

(A) The number of individuals who applied for pension under chapter 15 of such title.

(B) The number of individuals who received pension under such chapter.

(C) The number of individuals with respect to whom the Secretary denied or discontinued payment of pension under the subsections referred to in paragraph (1).

(D) A description of any trends identified by the Secretary regarding pension payments that have occurred as a result of the amendments made by this section.

(E) Such other information as the Secretary considers appropriate.

(3) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS DEFINED.—In this subsection, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(A) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs and the Select Committee on Aging of the Senate; and

(B) the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 803. EXTENSION OF REDUCED PENSION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS COVERED BY MEDICAID PLANS FOR SERVICES FURNISHED BY NURSING FACILITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subsection (d)(7) of section 5503 is amended by striking ''November 30, 2016'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''.

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENTS.—

(1) SECTION HEADING.—The section heading of such section is amended to read as follows: ''**Reduced pension for certain hospitalized veterans and certain veterans receiving domiciliary, nursing home, or nursing facility care**''.

(2) TABLE OF SECTIONS.—The table of sections at the beginning of chapter 55 is amended by striking the item relating to section 5503 and inserting the following new item:

''5503. Reduced pension for certain hospitalized veterans and certain veterans receiving domiciliary, nursing home, or nursing facility care.''.

SEC. 804. CONDITIONS ON AWARD OF PER DIEM PAYMENTS BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR PROVISION OF HOUSING OR SERVICES TO HOMELESS VETERANS.

(a) CONDITION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 2012(c)(1) is amended by striking ''unless the facilities'' and all that follows through ''may specify.'' and inserting the following: ''unless the Secretary certifies the following:

''(A) That the building where the grant recipient or eligible entity provides housing or services for which the grant recipient or eligible entity would receive such payment is in compliance with the codes relevant to the operations and level of care provided, including applicable provisions of the most recently published version of the Life Safety Code of the National Fire Protection Association or such other comparable fire and safety requirements as the Secretary may specify.

''(B) That such building and such housing or services are in compliance with licensing requirements, fire and safety requirements, and any other requirements in the jurisdiction in which the building is located regarding the condition of the building and the provision of such housing or services.''.

(2) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall apply with respect to an application for a per diem payment under section 2012 of title 38, United States Code, submitted on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) ANNUAL INSPECTIONS REQUIRED.—Section 2012 is amended by striking subsection (b) and inserting the following new subsection (b):

''(b)(1) Not less frequently than once each fiscal year, the Secretary shall inspect each facility of each grant recipient or entity eligible for payments under subsection (a) at which the recipients and entities provide services under section 2011 of this title or this section.

''(2) Except as provided in paragraph (1), inspections made under such paragraph shall be made at such times as the Secretary considers necessary.

''(3) An inspection of a facility of a recipient or entity described in paragraph (1) made

under such paragraph may be made with or without prior notice to the recipient or entity, as the Secretary considers appropriate.

''(4) No per diem payment may be provided to a grant recipient or eligible entity under this section unless the facilities of the grant recipient or eligible entity meet such standards as the Secretary shall prescribe.''.

(c) REVOCATION OF CERTIFICATION AUTHORIZED.—Subsection (c) of such section is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respectively;

(2) in paragraph (1), as amended by subsection (a)(1), by striking ''in paragraph (2)'' and inserting ''in paragraph (4)''; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

''(2) The Secretary may revoke any certification made under paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines that such certification is no longer accurate.''.

(d) CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION OF TERMINATION OF PER DIEM REQUIRED.—Such subsection is further amended by inserting after paragraph (2) the following new paragraph (3):

''(3) Not later than 30 days after the date on which the Secretary terminates provision of per diem payment under this section to a grant recipient or an eligible entity, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives notice of such termination if such termination were made because a facility of the grant recipient or eligible entity did not comply with—

''(A) an applicable provision of the most recently published version of the Life Safety Code of the National Fire Protection Association or such other comparable fire and safety requirement as the Secretary has specified; or

''(B) a licensing requirement, fire or safety requirement, or another requirement in the jurisdiction in which the facility is located regarding the condition of the facility.''.

(e) TREATMENT OF CURRENT RECIPIENTS OF PER DIEM PAYMENTS.—

(1) ASSESSMENT.—In the case of the recipient of a per diem payment under section 2012 of title 38, United States Code, that receives such a payment during the year in which this Act is enacted for the provision of housing or services, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall assess whether the building where such housing or services are provided is and whether the housing and services are in compliance as required by section 2012(c)(1) of such title, as amended by subsection (a)(1).

(2) FAILURE TO COMPLY.—In the case described in paragraph (1), if the Secretary does not certify the compliance of the building and the housing or services under such section before the date that is two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary may not make any additional per diem payments to the recipient for the provision of such housing or services under section 2012 of such title until the Secretary certifies that such building is and such housing or services are in compliance.

(f) CONFORMING CONDITION ON AWARD OF GRANTS BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE PROGRAMS.—Section 2011(b)(5)(A) is amended by inserting '', including housing and building codes,''.

SEC. 805. EXCEPTION TO CERTAIN RECAPTURE REQUIREMENTS AND TREATMENT OF CONTRACTS AND GRANTS WITH STATE HOMES WITH RESPECT TO CARE FOR HOMELESS VETERANS.

(a) EXCEPTION TO CERTAIN RECAPTURE REQUIREMENTS.—Section 8136(b) is amended by inserting '', or the provision of services or conduct of a program pursuant to a contract or grant issued or awarded by the Secretary under subchapter II of chapter 20 or section 2031(a)(2) of this title,'' after ''outpatient clinic''.

(b) CONSTRUCTION.—The amendment made by subsection (a) may not be construed to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into a contract with a State home or award a grant to a State home for the furnishing of residential care for a veteran without—

(1) identifying a substantial need for such care; and

(2) determining that the State home is the most appropriate provider of such care.

SEC. 806. EXTENDED PERIOD FOR SCHEDULING OF MEDICAL EXAMS FOR VETERANS RECEIVING TEMPORARY DISABILITY RATINGS FOR SEVERE MENTAL DISORDERS.

Section 1156(a)(3) is amended by striking ''six months'' and inserting ''18 months''.

SEC. 807. AUTHORITY TO ISSUE VETERANS ID CARDS.

(a) AUTHORITY.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may issue a card to a veteran that identifies the veteran as a veteran and includes a photo of the veteran and the name of the veteran.

(2) NO REQUIREMENT FOR ENROLLMENT OR RECEIPT OF BENEFITS.—The Secretary may issue a card under paragraph (1) to a veteran, whether or not such veteran is—

(A) enrolled in the system of annual patient enrollment established under section 1705(a) of title 38, United States Code; or

(B) in receipt of educational assistance, compensation, or pension under laws administered by the Secretary.

(3) DESIGNATION.—A card issued under paragraph (1) may be known as a ''Veterans ID Card''.

(b) RECOGNITION OF VETERANS ID CARDS FOR REDUCED PRICING OF PHARMACEUTICALS, CONSUMER PRODUCTS, AND SERVICES.—The Secretary may work with national retail chains that offer reduced prices on pharmaceuticals, consumer products, and services to veterans to ensure that such retail chains recognize cards issued under subsection (a)(1) for purposes of offering reduced prices on pharmaceuticals, consumer products, and services.

(c) VETERAN DEFINED.—In this section, the term ''veteran'' has the meaning given the term in section 101 of title 38, United States Code.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 808. HONORING AS VETERANS CERTAIN PERSONS WHO PERFORMED SERVICE IN THE RESERVE COMPONENTS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

Any person who is entitled under chapter 1223 of title 10, United States Code, to retired pay for nonregular service or, but for age, would be entitled under such chapter to retired pay for nonregular service shall be honored as a veteran but shall not be entitled to any benefit by reason of this honor.

SEC. 809. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION FROM SECRETARY OF TREASURY AND COMMISSIONER OF SOCIAL SECURITY FOR INCOME VERIFICATION PURPOSES.

Section 5317(g) is amended by striking ''September 30, 2016'' and inserting ''September 30, 2018''.

SEC. 810. EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY FOR SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO ISSUE AND GUARANTEE CERTAIN LOANS.

Section 3729(b)(2) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (A)—

(A) in clause (iii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (iv), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023'';

(2) in subparagraph (B)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023'';

(3) in subparagraph (C)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(4) in subparagraph (D)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking ''October 1, 2017'' and inserting ''September 30, 2023''.

SEC. 811. REVIEW OF DETERMINATION OF CERTAIN SERVICE IN PHILIPPINES DURING WORLD WAR II.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and such military historians as the Secretary of Defense recommends, shall review the process used to determine whether a covered individual served in support of the Armed Forces of the United States during World War II in accordance with section 1002(d) of title X of Division A of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–5; 38 U.S.C. 107 note) for purposes of determining whether such covered individual is eligible for payments described in such section.

(b) COVERED INDIVIDUALS.—In this section, a covered individual is any individual who timely submitted a claim for benefits under subsection (c) of section 1002 of title X of Division A of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Public Law 111–5; 38 U.S.C. 107 note) based on service as described in subsection (d) of that section.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report detailing any findings, actions taken, or recommendations for legislative action with respect to the review conducted under subsection (a).

(d) PROHIBITION ON BENEFITS FOR DISQUALIFYING CONDUCT UNDER NEW PROCESS PURSUANT TO REVIEW.—If pursuant to the review conducted under subsection (a) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs determines to establish a new process for the making of payments as described in that subsection, the process shall include mechanisms to ensure that individuals are not treated as covered individuals for purposes of such payments if such individuals engaged in any disqualifying conduct during service described in that subsection, including collaboration with the enemy or criminal conduct.

SEC. 812. REVIEW OF DETERMINATION OF CERTAIN SERVICE OF MERCHANT MARINERS DURING WORLD WAR II.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of Homeland Security and such military historians as the Secretary of Defense recommends, shall review the process used to determine whether an individual performed service under honorable conditions that satisfies the requirements of a coastwise merchant seaman who is recognized pursuant to section 401 of the GI Bill Improvement Act of 1977 (Public Law 95–202; 38 U.S.C. 106 note) as having performed active duty service .

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report detailing any findings, actions taken, or

recommendations for legislative action with respect to the review conducted under subsection (a).

SEC. 813. REPORT ON LAOTIAN MILITARY SUPPORT OF ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES DURING VIETNAM WAR.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than one year after the effective date specified in subsection (c), the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense and such agencies and individuals as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs considers appropriate, shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report on—

(1) the extent to which Laotian military forces provided combat support to the Armed Forces of the United States between February 28, 1961, and May 15, 1975;

(2) whether the current classification by the Civilian/Military Service Review Board of the Department of Defense of service by individuals of Hmong ethnicity is appropriate; and

(3) any recommendations for legislative action.

(b) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CONGRESS.—In this section, the term ''appropriate committees of Congress'' means—

(1) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate; and

(2) the Committee on Armed Services and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 814. REPORT ON PRACTICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO ADEQUATELY PROVIDE SERVICES TO VETERANS WITH HEARING LOSS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the actions taken by the Secretary to implement the findings and recommendations included in the 2006 report by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies entitled ''Noise and Military Service: Implications for Hearing Loss and Tinnitus'' that was prepared pursuant to section 104 of the Veterans Benefits Act of 2002 (Public Law 107–330; 116 Stat. 2822).

(b) EFFECT OF DUTY MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY NOISE EXPOSURE LISTING ON RECEIPT OF BENEFITS BY VETERANS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall include in the report required by subsection (a) an evaluation of the extent to which veterans who had a military occupational specialty during service as a member of the Armed Forces that is not included on the Duty Military Occupational Specialty Noise Exposure Listing (in this subsection referred to as the ''MOS List'') are precluded from receiving benefits related to hearing loss from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(2) DATA.—The Secretary shall include in the evaluation required by paragraph (1) the following:

(A) With respect to veterans who had a military occupational specialty included on the MOS List—

(i) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department of Veterans Affairs that were granted; and

(ii) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department that were denied.

(B) With respect to veterans who had a military occupational specialty not included on the MOS List—

(i) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department that were granted;

(ii) the number of claims for benefits related to hearing loss from the Department that were denied;

(iii) of the number of denied claims under clause (ii), the number of those claims that were appealed; and

(iv) of the number of appealed claims under clause (iii), the number of those appealed claims that were successfully appealed.

(c) ADDITIONAL MATTERS.—The Secretary shall include in the report required by subsection (a) the following:

(1) In the case of a veteran with unilateral hearing loss, an explanation of the scientific basis for the practice of the Department of determining a disability rating level with respect to hearing based on an examination of that veteran's healthy ear instead of the injured ear.

(2) An analysis of the reduction in earning capacity for veterans as a result of unilateral hearing loss, with a focus on the ability of those veterans—

(A) to detect the direction of sound; and

(B) to understand speech.

(3) An explanation of the rationale for the practice of the Department of not issuing a compensable rating for hearing loss at certain levels that are severe enough to require the use of hearing aids.

(4) A survey of the audiologists that conduct compensation and pension examinations for the Department to assess the implementation of the most recent edition of the best practices manual for hearing loss and tinnitus examinations that includes the following:

(A) A description of the training received by those audiologists compared to the methods described in the most recent edition of the best practices manual for hearing loss and tinnitus examinations.

(B) An assessment of how those audiologists have complied with that training.

(C) Whether those audiologists are using a range of tones up to 8000 hertz to test the hearing of veterans.

(d) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize or require the Secretary to defer, delay, or replace the ongoing efforts of the Secretary to update the schedule of ratings required by section 1155 of title 38, United States Code.

(e) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 815. REPORT ON JOINT PROGRAMS OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE WITH RESPECT TO HEARING LOSS OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, submit to Congress a report that identifies the following:

(1) Goals for the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense for the prevention, early detection, and treatment of hearing loss by the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Hearing Center of Excellence of the Department of Defense.

(2) Resources of the Department of Veterans Affairs that could be made available to assist the Department of Defense in conducting audiometric tests and tinnitus screenings for members of the Armed Forces.

(3) Barriers to information being added to the Hearing Loss and Auditory System Injury Registry required under section 721(c)(1) of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law 110–417; 122 Stat. 4506).

(4) Recommendations for any legislative or administrative actions necessary with respect to the Hearing Loss and Auditory System Injury Registry—

(A) to assist in achieving the goals specified in paragraph (1);

(B) to improve the adjudication of claims for benefits with respect to hearing loss; and

(C) to further the research objectives of the National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Hearing Center of Excellence of the Department of Defense.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—This section shall take effect on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 816. LIMITATION ON AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF BONUSES PAYABLE TO PERSONNEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS DURING FISCAL YEAR 2014.

The aggregate amount of bonuses and awards payable to personnel of the Department of Veterans Affairs under chapter 45 or 53 of title 5, United States Code, or any other provision of such title, during fiscal year 2014 may not exceed $368,000,000.

SEC. 817. DESIGNATION OF AMERICAN WORLD WAR II CITIES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall designate at least one city in the United States each year as an ''American World War II City''.

(b) CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION.—After the designation made under subsection (c), the Secretary, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, shall make each designation under subsection (a) based on the following criteria:

(1) Contributions by a city to the war effort during World War II, including those related to defense manufacturing, bond drives, service in the Armed Forces, and the presence of military facilities within the city.

(2) Efforts by a city to preserve the history of the city's contributions during World War II, including through the establishment of preservation organizations or museums, restoration of World War II facilities, and recognition of World War II veterans.

(c) FIRST AMERICAN WORLD WAR II CITY.—The city of Wilmington, North Carolina, is designated as an ''American World War II City''.

(d) EXPIRATION OF AUTHORITY.—The requirements of subsections (a) and (b) shall terminate on the date that is five years after the date of the enactment of this Act.

TITLE IX—IRAN SANCTIONS

SEC. 901. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the ''Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''.

SEC. 902. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON NUCLEAR WEAPON CAPABILITIES OF IRAN.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress makes the following findings:

(1) The Government of Iran continues to expand the nuclear and missile programs of Iran in violation of multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions.

(2) The Government of Iran has a decades-long track record of violating commitments regarding the nuclear program of Iran and has used diplomatic negotiations as a subterfuge to advance its nuclear weapons program.

(3) Iran remains the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism, having directed, supported, and financed acts of terrorism against the United States and its allies that have resulted in the thousands of deaths, including the deaths of United States citizens and members of the Armed Forces of the United States.

(4) The Government of Iran and its terrorist proxies, particularly Lebanese

Hezbollah, continue to provide military and financial support to the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, aiding that regime in the mass killing of the people of Syria.

(5) The Government of Iran continues to sow instability in the Middle East and threaten its neighbors, including allies of the United States, such as Israel.

(6) The Government of Iran denies its people fundamental freedoms, including freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, and freedom of conscience.

(7) Strict sanctions on Iran, imposed by the United States and the international community, are responsible for bringing Iran to the negotiating table.

(8) President Hassan Rouhani of Iran has in the past admitted to using diplomatic negotiations to buy time for Iran to make nuclear advances.

(9) Based on Iran's current stockpile of uranium enriched to 3.5 percent and 20 percent and its current centrifuge capacity, Iran could produce a sufficient quantity of weapons-grade uranium for a bomb in one to 2 months' time.

(10) If the Government of Iran commences the operation of its heavy water reactor in Arak, it could establish an alternate pathway to a nuclear weapon through the production of plutonium.

(11) As of the date of the enactment of this Act, 19 countries access nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without conducting any enrichment or reprocessing activities within those countries.

(12) The Government of Iran could likewise access nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without conducting any enrichment or reprocessing activities within Iran.

(b) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the Government of Iran must not be allowed to develop or maintain nuclear weapon capabilities;

(2) all instruments of power and influence of the United States should remain on the table to prevent the Government of Iran from developing nuclear weapon capabilities;

(3) the Government of Iran does not have an absolute or inherent right to enrichment and reprocessing capabilities and technologies under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, done at Washington, London, and Moscow July 1, 1968, and entered into force March 5, 1970 (commonly known as the ''Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty'');

(4) the imposition of sanctions under this title, including sanctions on exports of petroleum from Iran, is triggered by violations by Iran of any interim or final agreement regarding its nuclear program, failure to reach a final agreement in a discernible time frame, or the breach of other conditions described in section 931;

(5) if the Government of Israel is compelled to take military action in legitimate self-defense against Iran's nuclear weapon program, the United States Government should stand with Israel and provide, in accordance with the law of the United States and the constitutional responsibility of Congress to authorize the use of military force, diplomatic, military, and economic support to the Government of Israel in its defense of its territory, people, and existence;

(6) the United States should continue to impose sanctions on the Government of Iran and its terrorist proxies for their continuing sponsorship of terrorism; and

(7) the United States should continue to impose sanctions on the Government of Iran for—

(A) its ongoing abuses of human rights; and

(B) its actions in support of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Subtitle A—Expansion and Imposition of Sanctions

SEC. 911. APPLICABILITY OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO PETROLEUM TRANSACTIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1245(d)(4)(D)(i) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8513a(d)(4)(D)(i)) is amended—

(1) in subclause (I), by striking ''reduced reduced its volume of crude oil purchases from Iran'' and inserting ''reduced the volume of its purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin''; and

(2) in subclause (II), by striking ''crude oil purchases from Iran'' and inserting ''purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin''.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—Section 1245(h) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8513a(h)) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and (4) as paragraphs (5) and (6), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

''(3) IRANIAN ORIGIN.—The term 'Iranian origin', with respect to petroleum, means extracted, produced, or refined in Iran.

''(4) PETROLEUM.—The term 'petroleum' includes crude oil, lease condensates, fuel oils, and other unfinished oils.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 102(b) of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8712(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3)—

(A) by striking ''crude oil purchases from Iran'' and inserting ''purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin''; and

(B) by striking ''as amended by section 504,''; and

(2) in paragraph (4), by striking ''crude oil purchases'' and inserting ''purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to determinations under section 1245(d)(4)(D)(i) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8513a(d)(4)(D)(i)) on or after the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 912. INELIGIBILITY FOR EXCEPTION TO CERTAIN SANCTIONS FOR COUNTRIES THAT DO NOT REDUCE PURCHASES OF PETROLEUM FROM IRAN OR OF IRANIAN ORIGIN TO A DE MINIMIS LEVEL.

(a) STATEMENT OF POLICY.—It is the policy of the United States to seek to ensure that all countries reduce their purchases of crude oil, lease condensates, fuel oils, and other unfinished oils from Iran or of Iranian origin to a de minimis level by the end of the 1-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) INELIGIBILITY FOR EXCEPTIONS TO SANCTIONS.—Section 1245(d)(4)(D) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8513a(d)(4)(D)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(iii) INELIGIBILITY FOR EXCEPTION.—

''(I) IN GENERAL.—A country that purchased petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin during the one-year period preceding the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014 may continue to receive an exception under clause (i) on or after the date that is one year after such date of enactment only—

''(aa) if the country reduces its purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin to a de minimis level by the end of the one-year period beginning on such date of enactment; or

''(bb) as provided in subclause (II) or (III).

''(II) COUNTRIES THAT DRAMATICALLY REDUCE PURCHASES.—

''(aa) IN GENERAL.—A country that would otherwise be ineligible pursuant to subclause (I)(aa) to receive an exception under clause (i) may continue to receive such an exception during the one-year period beginning on the date that is one year after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014 if the country—

''(AA) dramatically reduces by at least 30 percent its purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin during the one-year period beginning on such date of enactment; and

''(BB) is expected to reduce its purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin to a de minimis level within a defined period of time that is not longer than 2 years after such date of enactment.

''(bb) TERMINATION OF EXCEPTION.—If a country that continues to receive an exception under clause (i) pursuant to item (aa) does not reduce its purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin to a de minimis level by the date that is 2 years after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014, that country shall not be eligible for such an exception on or after the date that is 2 years after such date of enactment.

''(III) REINSTATEMENT OF ELIGIBILITY FOR EXCEPTION.—A country that becomes ineligible for an exception under clause (i) pursuant to subclause (I) or (II) shall be eligible for such an exception in accordance with the provisions of clause (i) on and after the date on which the President determines the country has reduced its purchases of petroleum from Iran or of Iranian origin to a de minimis level.''.

(c) CONFORMING AMENDMENT.—Section 1245(d)(4)(D)(i) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8513a(d)(4)(D)(i)) is amended in the matter preceding subclause (I) by striking ''Sanctions imposed'' and inserting ''Except as provided in clause (iii), sanctions imposed''.

SEC. 913. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO PORTS, SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES, AND STRATEGIC SECTORS OF IRAN.

(a) FINDINGS.—Section 1244(a)(1) of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8803(a)(1)) is amended by striking ''and shipbuilding'' and inserting ''shipbuilding, construction, engineering, and mining''.

(b) EXPANSION OF DESIGNATION OF ENTITIES OF PROLIFERATION CONCERN.—Section 1244(b) of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8803(b)) is amended by striking ''in Iran and entities in the energy, shipping, and shipbuilding sectors'' and inserting '', special economic zones, or free economic zones in Iran, and entities in strategic sectors''.

(c) EXPANSION OF ENTITIES SUBJECT TO ASSET FREEZE.—Section 1244(c) of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8803(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking ''the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''; and

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ''the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014'';

(B) by striking ''the energy, shipping, or shipbuilding sectors'' each place it appears and inserting ''a strategic sector''; and

(C) by inserting '', special economic zone, or free economic zone'' after ''port'' each place it appears; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(4) STRATEGIC SECTOR DEFINED.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—In this section, the term 'strategic sector' means—

''(i) the energy, shipping, shipbuilding, and mining sectors of Iran;

''(ii) except as provided in subparagraph (B), the construction and engineering sectors of Iran; and

''(iii) any other sector the President designates as of strategic importance to Iran.

''(B) EXCEPTION FOR CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING OF SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, AND SIMILAR FACILITIES.—For purposes of this section, a person engaged in the construction or engineering of schools, hospitals, or similar facilities (as determined by the President) shall not be considered part of a strategic sector of Iran.

''(C) NOTIFICATION OF STRATEGIC SECTOR DESIGNATION.—The President shall submit to Congress a notification of the designation of a sector as a strategic sector of Iran for purposes of subparagraph (A)(iii) not later than 5 days after the date on which the President makes the designation.''.

(d) ADDITIONAL SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO STRATEGIC SECTORS.—Section 1244(d) of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8803(d)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(A), by striking ''the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014'';

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking ''the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''; and

(3) in paragraph (3), by striking ''the energy, shipping, or shipbuilding sectors'' and inserting ''a strategic sector''.

(e) SALE, SUPPLY, OR TRANSFER OF CERTAIN MATERIALS TO OR FROM IRAN.—Section 1245 of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8804) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(1)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ''the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''; and

(B) in subparagraph (C)(i)(I), by striking ''the energy, shipping, or shipbuilding sectors'' and inserting ''a strategic sector (as defined in section 1244(c)(4))''; and

(2) in subsection (c), by striking ''the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''.

(f) PROVISION OF INSURANCE TO SANCTIONED PERSONS.—Section 1246(a)(1) of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8805(a)(1)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking ''the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''; and

(2) in subparagraph (B)(i), by striking ''the energy, shipping, or shipbuilding sectors'' and inserting ''a strategic sector (as defined in section 1244(c)(4))''.

(g) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 1244 of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8803), as amended by subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d), is further amended—

(1) in the section heading, by striking ''**THE ENERGY, SHIPPING, AND SHIPBUILDING**'' and inserting ''**CERTAIN PORTS, ECONOMIC ZONES, AND**'';

(2) in subsection (b), in the subsection heading, by striking ''PORTS AND ENTITIES IN THE ENERGY, SHIPPING, AND SHIPBUILDING SECTORS OF IRAN'' and inserting ''CERTAIN ENTITIES'';

(3) in subsection (c), in the subsection heading, by striking ''ENTITIES IN ENERGY, SHIPPING, AND SHIPBUILDING SECTORS'' and inserting ''CERTAIN ENTITIES''; and

(4) in subsection (d), in the subsection heading, by striking ''THE ENERGY, SHIPPING, AND SHIPBUILDING'' and inserting ''STRATEGIC''.

SEC. 914. IDENTIFICATION OF, AND IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO, CERTAIN IRANIAN INDIVIDUALS.

(a) EXPANSION OF INDIVIDUALS IDENTIFIED.—Section 221(a) of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8727(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(C), by striking ''; or'' and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking the period at the end and inserting a semicolon; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(3) an individual who engages in activities for or on behalf of the Government of Iran that enables Iran to evade sanctions imposed by the United States with respect to Iran;

''(4) an individual acting on behalf of the Government of Iran who is involved in corrupt activities of that Government or the diversion of humanitarian goods, including agricultural commodities, food, medicine, and medical devices, intended for the people of Iran; or

''(5) a senior official—

''(A) of an entity designated for the imposition of sanctions pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) in connection with—

''(i) Iran's proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction; or

''(ii) Iran's support for acts of international terrorism; and

''(B) who was involved in the activity for which the entity was designated for the imposition of sanctions.''.

(b) EXPANSION OF SENIOR OFFICIALS DESCRIBED.—Section 221(b) of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8727(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (5), by striking ''; or'' and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (6), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(7) a senior official of—

''(A) the Office of the Supreme Leader of Iran;

''(B) the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran;

''(C) the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran;

''(D) the Council of Ministers of Iran;

''(E) the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics of Iran;

''(F) the Ministry of Justice of Iran;

''(G) the Ministry of Interior of Iran;

''(H) the prison system of Iran; or

''(I) the judicial system of Iran.''.

(c) BLOCKING OF PROPERTY.—Section 221 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8727) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsections (d) and (e) as subsections (e) and (f), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after subsection (c) the following:

''(d) BLOCKING OF PROPERTY.—

''(1) OFFICIALS AND OTHER ACTORS.—In the case of an individual described in paragraph (1), (3), (4), or (5) of subsection (a) who is on the list required by that subsection, the President shall block and prohibit all transactions in all property and interests in property of that individual if such property or interests in property are in the United States, come within the United States, or are or come within the possession or control of a United States person.

''(2) FAMILY MEMBERS.—In the case of an individual described in paragraph (2) of subsection (a) who is on the list required by that subsection, the President shall block and prohibit a transaction in property or an interest in property of that individual if the property or interest in property—

''(A) was transferred to that individual from an individual described in paragraph (1) of subsection (a) who is on the list required by that subsection; and

''(B) is in the United States, comes within the United States, or is or comes within the possession or control of a United States person.''.

(d) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 221 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8727), as amended by subsections (a), (b), and (c), is further amended—

(1) by striking the section heading and inserting ''**IDENTIFICATION OF, AND IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO, CERTAIN IRANIAN INDIVIDUALS**'';

(2) in subsection (a), by striking ''the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''; and

(3) in subsection (c), by striking ''subsection (d)'' and inserting ''subsection (e)''.

(e) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents for the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8701 et seq.) is amended by striking the item relating to section 221 and inserting the following:

''Sec. 221. Identification of, and imposition of sanctions with respect to, certain Iranian individuals.''.

SEC. 915. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO TRANSACTIONS IN FOREIGN CURRENCIES WITH OR FOR CERTAIN SANCTIONED PERSONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title II of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8721 et seq.) is amended—

(1) by inserting after section 221 the following:

''Subtitle C—Other Matters'';

(2) by redesignating sections 222, 223, and 224 as sections 231, 232, and 233, respectively; and

(3) by inserting after section 221 the following:

''SEC. 222. IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS WITH RESPECT TO TRANSACTIONS IN FOREIGN CURRENCIES WITH CERTAIN SANCTIONED PERSONS.

''(a) IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS.—The President—

''(1) shall prohibit the opening, and prohibit or impose strict conditions on the maintaining, in the United States of a correspondent account or a payable-through account by a foreign financial institution that knowingly conducts or facilitates a transaction described in subsection (b)(1); and

''(2) may impose sanctions pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) with respect to any other person that knowingly conducts or facilitates such a transaction.

''(b) TRANSACTIONS DESCRIBED.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—A transaction described in this subsection is a significant transaction conducted or facilitated by a person related to the currency of a country other than the country with primary jurisdiction over the person with, for, or on behalf of—

''(A) the Central Bank of Iran or an Iranian financial institution designated by the Secretary of the Treasury for the imposition of

sanctions pursuant to the International Emergency Economic Powers Act; or

''(B) a person described in section 1244(c)(2) of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8803(c)(2)) (other than a person described in subparagraph (C)(iii) of that subsection).

''(2) PRIMARY JURISDICTION.—For purposes of paragraph (1), a country in which a person operates shall be deemed to have primary jurisdiction over the person only with respect to the operations of the person in that country.

''(c) APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (a) shall apply with respect to a transaction described in subsection (b)(1) conducted or facilitated—

''(1) on or after the date that is 90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014 pursuant to a contract entered into on or after such date of enactment; and

''(2) on or after the date that is 180 days after such date of enactment pursuant to a contract entered into before such date of enactment.

''(d) INAPPLICABILITY TO HUMANITARIAN TRANSACTIONS.—The President may not impose sanctions under subsection (a) with respect to any person for conducting or facilitating a transaction for the sale of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices to Iran or for the provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Iran.

''(e) WAIVER.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—The President may waive the application of subsection (a) with respect to a person for a period of not more than 180 days, and may renew that waiver for additional periods of not more than 180 days, if the President—

''(A) determines that the waiver is important to the national interest of the United States; and

''(B) not less than 15 days after the waiver or the renewal of the waiver, as the case may be, takes effect, submits a report to the appropriate congressional committees on the waiver and the reason for the waiver.

''(2) FORM OF REPORT.—Each report submitted under paragraph (1)(B) shall be submitted in unclassified form but may contain a classified annex.

''(f) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

''(1) FINANCIAL INSTITUTION; IRANIAN FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The terms 'financial institution' and 'Iranian financial institution' have the meanings given those terms in section 104A(d) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8513b(d)).

''(2) TRANSACTION.—The term 'transaction' includes a foreign exchange swap, a foreign exchange forward, and any other type of currency exchange or conversion or derivative instrument.''.

(b) ADDITIONAL DEFINITIONS.—Section 2 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act (22 U.S.C. 8701) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2), (3), and (4) as paragraphs (5), (6), and (9), respectively;

(2) by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

''(1) ACCOUNT; CORRESPONDENT ACCOUNT; PAYABLE-THROUGH ACCOUNT.—The terms 'account', 'correspondent account', and 'payable-through account' have the meanings given those terms in section 5318A of title 31, United States Code.

''(2) AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY.—The term 'agricultural commodity' has the meaning given that term in section 102 of the Agricultural Trade Act of 1978 (7 U.S.C. 5602).

''(3) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term 'appropriate congressional committees' has the meaning given that term in section 14 of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

''(4) DOMESTIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTION; FOREIGN FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.—The terms 'domestic financial institution' and 'foreign financial institution' have the meanings determined by the Secretary of the Treasury pursuant to section 104(i) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8513(i)).''; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (6), as redesignated by paragraph (1), the following:

''(7) MEDICAL DEVICE.—The term 'medical device' has the meaning given the term 'device' in section 201 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321).

''(8) MEDICINE.—The term 'medicine' has the meaning given the term 'drug' in section 201 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321).''.

(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents for the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 is amended by striking the items relating to sections 222, 223, and 224 and inserting the following:

''Sec. 222. Imposition of sanctions with respect to transactions in foreign currencies with certain sanctioned persons.

''Subtitle C—Other Matters

''Sec. 231. Sense of Congress and rule of construction relating to certain authorities of State and local governments.

''Sec. 232. Government Accountability Office report on foreign entities that invest in the energy sector of Iran or export refined petroleum products to Iran.

''Sec. 233. Reporting on the importation to and exportation from Iran of crude oil and refined petroleum products.''.

SEC. 916. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON PROSPECTIVE SANCTIONS.

It is the sense of Congress that, if additional sanctions are imposed pursuant to this title and the Government of Iran continues to pursue an illicit nuclear weapons program, Congress should pursue additional stringent sanctions on Iran, such as sanctions on entities providing the Government of Iran access to assets of the Government of Iran held outside Iran, sanctions on Iran's energy sector, including its natural gas sector, and sanctions on entities providing certain underwriting, insurance, or reinsurance to the Government of Iran.

Subtitle B—Enforcement of Sanctions

SEC. 921. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON THE PROVISION OF SPECIALIZED FINANCIAL MESSAGING SERVICES TO THE CENTRAL BANK OF IRAN AND OTHER SANCTIONED IRANIAN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) the President has been engaged in intensive diplomatic efforts to ensure that sanctions against Iran are imposed and maintained multilaterally to sharply restrict the access of the Government of Iran to the global financial system;

(2) the European Union is to be commended for strengthening the multilateral sanctions regime against Iran by prohibiting all persons subject to the jurisdiction of the European Union from providing specialized financial messaging services to the Central Bank of Iran and other sanctioned Iranian financial institutions;

(3) in order to continue to sharply restrict access by Iran to the global financial system, the President and the European Union must continue to expeditiously address any judicial, administrative, or other decisions in their respective jurisdictions that might weaken the current multilateral sanctions regime, including decisions regarding the designation of financial institutions and global specialized financial messaging service providers for sanctions; and

(4) existing restrictions on the access of Iran to global specialized financial messaging services should be maintained.

SEC. 922. INCLUSION OF TRANSFERS OF GOODS, SERVICES, AND TECHNOLOGIES TO STRATEGIC SECTORS OF IRAN FOR PURPOSES OF IDENTIFYING DESTINATIONS OF DIVERSION CONCERN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 302(b) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8542(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in subparagraph (B)—

(i) in clause (ii), by striking ''; or'' and inserting a semicolon;

(ii) in clause (iii), by striking ''; and'' and inserting ''; or''; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

''(iv) strategic sectors; and''; and

(B) in subparagraph (C)(ii), by striking ''; or'' and inserting a semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking the period at the end and inserting ''; or''; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

''(3) that will be sold, transferred, or otherwise made available to a strategic sector of Iran.''.

(b) STRATEGIC SECTOR DEFINED.—Section 301 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8541) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (14) as paragraph (15); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (13) the following:

''(14) STRATEGIC SECTOR.—The term 'strategic sector' has the meaning given that term in section 1244(c)(4) of the Iran Freedom and Counter-Proliferation Act of 2012.''.

(c) SUBMISSION OF REPORT.—Section 302(a) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8542(a)) is amended by striking ''180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act'' and inserting ''90 days after the date of the enactment of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014''.

SEC. 923. AUTHORIZATION OF ADDITIONAL MEASURES WITH RESPECT TO DESTINATIONS OF DIVERSION CONCERN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 303(c) of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8543(c)) is amended—

(1) by striking ''Not later than'' and inserting the following:

''(1) LICENSING REQUIREMENT.—Not later than''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

''(2) ADDITIONAL MEASURES.—The President may—

''(A) impose restrictions on United States foreign assistance or measures authorized under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (50 U.S.C. 1701 et seq.) with respect to a country designated as a Destination of Diversion Concern under subsection (a) if the President determines that those restrictions or measures would prevent the diversion of goods, services, and technologies described in section 302(b) to Iranian end-users or Iranian intermediaries; or

''(B) prohibit the issuance of a license under section 38 of the Arms Export Control Act (22 U.S.C. 2778) for the export to such a country of a defense article or defense service for which a notification to Congress would be required under section 36(b) of that Act (22 U.S.C. 2776(b)).

''(3) REPORT REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of the

Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014, and every 90 days thereafter, the President shall submit to the appropriate congressional committees a report—

''(A) identifying countries that have allowed the diversion through the country of goods, services, or technologies described in section 302(b) to Iranian end-users or Iranian intermediaries during the 180-day period preceding the submission of the report;

''(B) identifying the persons that engaged in such diversion during that period; and

''(C) describing the activities relating to diversion in which those countries and persons engaged.''.

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 303 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8543) is amended—

(1) in subsection (c), in the subsection heading, by striking ''LICENSING REQUIREMENT'' and inserting ''LICENSING AND OTHER MEASURES''; and

(2) in subsection (d)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking ''subsection (c)'' and inserting ''subsection (c)(1)'';

(B) in paragraph (2), by striking ''subsection (c)'' and inserting ''subsection (c)(1)''; and

(C) in paragraph (3), by striking ''is it'' and inserting ''it is''.

SEC. 924. SENSE OF CONGRESS ON INCREASED STAFFING FOR AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN.

It is the sense of Congress that—

(1) when the President submits the President's budget for fiscal year 2015 to Congress under section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, the President should, in that budget, prioritize—

(A) resources for the Office of Foreign Assets Control for the Department of Treasury dedicated to the implementation and enforcement of sanctions with respect to Iran; and

(B) resources for the Department of State dedicated to the implementation and enforcement of sanctions with respect to Iran; and

(2) the appropriate committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives should prioritize the resources described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of paragraph (1) during consideration of authorization and appropriations legislation in future fiscal years.

Subtitle C—Implementation of Sanctions

SEC. 931. SUSPENSION OF SANCTIONS TO FACILITATE A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION.

(a) SUSPENSION OF NEW SANCTIONS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President may suspend the application of sanctions imposed under this title or amendments made by this title for a 180-day period beginning on the earlier of the date of the enactment of this Act or the date on which the President submits a notification described in paragraph (5) to the appropriate congressional committees, if the President makes the certification described in paragraph (2) to the appropriate congressional committees every 30 days during that period.

(2) CERTIFICATION DESCRIBED.—A certification described in this paragraph is a certification that—

(A) Iran is complying with the provisions of the Joint Plan of Action and any agreement to implement the Joint Plan of Action;

(B) Iran has agreed to specific and verifiable measures to implement the Joint Plan of Action;

(C) Iran is transparently, verifiably, and fully implementing the Joint Plan of Action and any agreement to implement the Joint Plan of Action;

(D) Iran has not breached the terms of or any commitment made pursuant to the Joint Plan of Action or any agreement to implement the Joint Plan of Action;

(E) Iran is proactively and in good faith engaged in negotiations toward a final agreement or arrangement to terminate its illicit nuclear activities, related weaponization activities, and any other nuclear activity not required for a civilian nuclear program;

(F) the United States is working toward a final agreement or arrangement that will dismantle Iran's illicit nuclear infrastructure to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability and permit daily verification, monitoring, and inspections of suspect facilities in Iran so that an effort by Iran to produce a nuclear weapon would be quickly detected;

(G) any suspension of or relief from sanctions provided to Iran pursuant to the Joint Plan of Action is temporary, reversible, and proportionate to the specific and verifiable measures taken by Iran with respect to terminating its illicit nuclear program and related weaponization activities;

(H) Iran has not directly, or through a proxy, supported, financed, planned, or otherwise carried out an act of terrorism against the United States or United States persons or property anywhere in the world;

(I) Iran has not conducted any tests for ballistic missiles with a range exceeding 500 kilometers; and

(J) the suspension of sanctions is vital to the national security interests of the United States.

(3) RENEWAL OF SUSPENSION.—Following the 180-day period described in paragraph (1), the President may renew a suspension of sanctions under that paragraph for 2 additional periods of not more than 30 days if, for each such renewal, the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(A) a certification described in paragraph (2) that covers the 30 days preceding the certification; and

(B) a certification that a final agreement or arrangement with Iran to fully and verifiably terminate its illicit nuclear program and related weaponization activities is imminent and that Iran will, pursuant to that agreement or arrangement, dismantle its illicit nuclear infrastructure to preclude a nuclear breakout capability and other capabilities critical to the production of nuclear weapons.

(4) TERMINATION OF SUSPENSION OF EXISTING SANCTIONS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Any sanctions deferred, waived, or otherwise suspended by the President pursuant to the Joint Plan of Action or any agreement to implement the Joint Plan of Action, including sanctions suspended under this section and sanctions relating to precious metals, petrochemicals, Iran's automotive sector, and sanctions pursuant to section 1245 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8513a), shall be reinstated immediately if—

(i)(I) during the 180-day period described in paragraph (1), the President does not submit a certification every 30 days pursuant that paragraph; or

(II) the President does not renew the suspension of sanctions pursuant to paragraph (3);

(ii) Iran breaches its commitments under either the Joint Plan of Action or a final agreement or arrangement described in subsection (b)(1); or

(iii) no final arrangement or agreement is reached with Iran by the earlier of the date that is 240 days after—

(I) the date of the enactment of this Act; or

(II) the date on which the President submits a notification described in paragraph (5) to the appropriate congressional committees.

(B) WAIVER.—

(i) IN GENERAL.—The President may waive the reinstatement of any sanction under subparagraph (A)(iii) for periods of not more than 30 days during the period specified in clause (ii) if, for each such waiver, the President submits to the appropriate congressional committees—

(I) a notification of the waiver;

(II) a certification described in paragraph (2) that covers the 30 days preceding the certification;

(III) a certification that the waiver is vital to the national security interests of the United States with respect to the dismantlement of Iran's illicit nuclear weapons program; and

(IV) a detailed report on the status of the negotiations with the Government of Iran on a final agreement or arrangement to terminate its illicit nuclear program and related weaponization activities, including an assessment of prospects for and the expected timeline to reach such an agreement or arrangement.

(ii) PERIOD SPECIFIED.—The period specified in this clause is the period that begins on the date of the enactment of this Act and ends on the earlier of the date that is one year after—

(I) such date of enactment; or

(II) the date on which the President submits a notification described in paragraph (5) to the appropriate congressional committees.

(5) NOTIFICATION RELATING TO AGREEMENT TO IMPLEMENT JOINT PLAN OF ACTION.—Not later than 3 days after Iran has agreed to specific and verifiable measures to implement the Joint Plan of Action, the President shall notify the appropriate congressional committees of that agreement.

(b) SUSPENSION FOR A FINAL AGREEMENT OR ARRANGEMENT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Unless a joint resolution of disapproval is enacted pursuant to subsection (c), the President may suspend the application of sanctions imposed under this title or amendments made by this title for a one-year period if the President certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the United States and its allies have reached a final and verifiable agreement or arrangement with Iran that will—

(A) dismantle Iran's illicit nuclear infrastructure, including enrichment and reprocessing capabilities and facilities, the heavy water reactor and production plant at Arak, and any nuclear weapon components and technology, so that Iran is precluded from a nuclear breakout capability and prevented from pursuing both uranium and plutonium pathways to a nuclear weapon;

(B) bring Iran into compliance with all United Nations Security Council resolutions related to Iran's nuclear program, including Resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1835 (2008), and 1929 (2010), with a view toward bringing to a satisfactory conclusion the Security Council's consideration of matters relating to Iran's nuclear program;

(C) resolve all issues of past and present concern with the International Atomic Energy Agency, including possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program;

(D) permit continuous, around the clock, on-site inspection, verification, and monitoring of all suspect facilities in Iran, including installation and use of any compliance verification equipment requested by the International Atomic Energy Agency, so that any effort by Iran to produce a nuclear weapon would be quickly detected; and

(E) require Iran's full implementation of and compliance with the Agreement between

Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, done at Vienna June 19, 1973, including modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements to that Agreement and ratification and implementation of the Protocol Additional to that Agreement, done at Vienna December 18, 2003; and

(F) requires Iran's implementation of measures in addition to the Protocol Additional that include verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency of Iran's centrifuge manufacturing facilities, including raw materials and components, and Iran's uranium mines and mills.

(2) RENEWAL OF SUSPENSION.—The President may renew the suspension of sanctions pursuant to paragraph (1) for additional one-year periods if, for each such renewal, the President—

(A) certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that Iran is complying with the terms of the final arrangement or agreement, including by—

(i) dismantling Iran's illicit nuclear infrastructure, including enrichment and reprocessing capabilities and facilities, and the heavy water reactor and production plant at Arak, so that Iran is prevented from pursuing both uranium and plutonium pathways to a nuclear weapon;

(ii) permitting continuous, around the clock, on-site inspection, verification, and monitoring of all suspect facilities in Iran, including installation and use of any compliance verification equipment requested by the International Atomic Energy Agency, so that any effort by Iran to produce a nuclear weapon would be quickly detected;

(iii) resolving all issues of past and present concern with the International Atomic Energy Agency, including possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program;

(iv) remaining in full compliance with all United Nations Security Council resolutions related to Iran's nuclear program, including Resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1835 (2008), and 1929 (2010);

(v) fully implementing and complying with the Agreement between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, done at Vienna June 19, 1973, including modified Code 3.1 of the Subsidiary Arrangements to that Agreement and ratification and implementation of the Protocol Additional to that Agreement, done at Vienna December 18, 2003; and

(vi) implementing measures, in addition to the Protocol Additional, that include verification by the International Atomic Energy Agency of Iran's centrifuge manufacturing facilities, including raw materials and components, and Iran's uranium mines and mills; and

(B) submits to the appropriate congressional committees with the certification under subparagraph (A) a detailed report describing the actions taken by Iran to comply with the terms of the final arrangement or agreement.

(c) JOINT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In this subsection, the term ''joint resolution of disapproval'' means only a joint resolution of the 2 Houses of Congress, the sole matter after the resolving clause of which is as follows: ''That Congress disapproves of the suspension of sanctions imposed with respect to Iran under section 931(b)(1) of the Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2014 pursuant to the certification of the President submitted to Congress under that section on _____'', with the blank space being filled with the appropriate date.

(2) PROCEDURES FOR CONSIDERING RESOLUTIONS.—

(A) INTRODUCTION.—A joint resolution of disapproval—

(i) may be introduced in the House of Representatives or the Senate during the 15-day period beginning on the date on which the President submits a certification under subsection (b)(1) to the appropriate congressional committees;

(ii) in the House of Representatives, may be introduced by the Speaker or the minority leader or a Member of the House designated by the Speaker or minority leader;

(iii) in the Senate, may be introduced by the majority leader or minority leader of the Senate or a Member of the Senate designated by the majority leader or minority leader; and

(iv) may not be amended.

(B) REFERRAL TO COMMITTEES.—A joint resolution of disapproval introduced in the Senate shall be referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs and a joint resolution of disapproval in the House of Representatives shall be referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

(C) COMMITTEE DISCHARGE AND FLOOR CONSIDERATION.—The provisions of subsections (c) through (f) of section 152 of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2192) (relating to committee discharge and floor consideration of certain resolutions in the House of Representatives and the Senate) apply to a joint resolution of disapproval under this subsection to the same extent that such subsections apply to joint resolutions under such section 152, except that—

(i) subsection (c)(1) shall be applied and administered by substituting ''10 days'' for ''30 days''; and

(ii) subsection (f)(1)(A)(i) shall be applied and administered by substituting ''Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs'' for ''Committee on Finance''.

(3) RULES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATE.—This subsection is enacted by Congress—

(A) as an exercise of the rulemaking power of the Senate and the House of Representatives, respectively, and as such is deemed a part of the rules of each House, respectively, but applicable only with respect to the procedure to be followed in that House in the case of a joint resolution, and it supersedes other rules only to the extent that it is inconsistent with such rules; and

(B) with full recognition of the constitutional right of either House to change the rules (so far as relating to the procedure of that House) at any time, in the same manner and to the same extent as in the case of any other rule of that House.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.—The term ''appropriate congressional committees'' has the meaning given that term in section 14 of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note).

(2) JOINT PLAN OF ACTION.—The term ''Joint Plan of Action'' means the Joint Plan of Action, signed at Geneva November 24, 2013, by Iran and by France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

(3) UNITED STATES PERSON.—The term ''United States person'' has the meaning given that term in section 101 of the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 (22 U.S.C. 8511).

Subtitle D—General Provisions

SEC. 941. EXCEPTION FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION.

The President may provide for an exception from the imposition of sanctions under the provisions of or amendments made by this title for reconstruction assistance or economic development for Afghanistan—

(1) to the extent that the President determines that such an exception is in the national interest of the United States; and

(2) if, not later than 15 days before issuing the exception, the President submits a notification of and justification for the exception to the appropriate congressional committees (as defined in section 14 of the Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–172; 50 U.S.C. 1701 note)).

SEC. 942. EXCEPTION FOR IMPORT RESTRICTIONS.

No provision of or amendment made by this title authorizes or requires the President to impose sanctions relating to the importation of goods.

SEC. 943. APPLICABILITY TO CERTAIN INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES.

Nothing in this title or the amendments made by this title shall apply to the authorized intelligence activities of the United States.

SEC. 944. APPLICABILITY TO CERTAIN NATURAL GAS PROJECTS.

Nothing in this title or any amendment made by this title shall be construed to apply with respect to any activity relating to a project described in subsection (a) of section 603 of the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 (22 U.S.C. 8783) to which the exception under that section applies at the time of the activity.

SEC. 945. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION WITH RESPECT TO THE USE OF FORCE AGAINST IRAN.

Nothing in this title or the amendments made by this title shall be construed as a declaration of war or an authorization of the use of force against Iran.

SA 2753. Ms. WARREN (for herself and Mr. RUBIO) submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by her to the bill S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

On page 367, after line 14, add the following:

SEC. 918. PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUALS ELIGIBLE FOR INCREASED PENSION UNDER LAWS ADMINISTERED BY SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ON BASIS OF NEED FOR REGULAR AID AND ATTENDANCE.

(a) DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STANDARDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall work with the heads of Federal agencies, States, and such experts as the Secretary considers appropriate to develop and implement Federal and State standards that protect individuals from dishonest, predatory, or otherwise unlawful practices relating to increased pension available to such individuals under chapter 15 of title 38, United States Code, on the basis of need for regular aid and attendance.

(2) SUBMITTAL TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives the standards developed under paragraph (1).

(b) CONDITIONAL RECOMMENDATION BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—If the Secretary does not, on or before the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives standards that are developed under subsection (a)(1), the Comptroller General of the

United States shall, not later than the date that is 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, submit to such committees a report containing standards that the Comptroller General determines are standards that would be effective in protecting individuals as described in such subsection.

(c) STUDY BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL.—Not later than 540 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall complete a study on standards implemented under this section to protect individuals as described in subsection (a)(1) and submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report containing the findings of the Comptroller General with respect to such study.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Armed Services be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 9 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing entitled ''Reauthorizing Tria: The State of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Market, Part II.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on February 25, 2014, at 10 a.m., in room 430 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building to conduct a hearing entitled ''Examining Mental Health: Treatment Options and Trends.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 10 a.m., in room SD–226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Nominations.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Veterans' Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 2 p.m., to conduct a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs for the legislative presentation of the Disabled American Veterans

The Committee will meet in room 345 of the Cannon House Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee on Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 2:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 2:30 p.m., in room SH–216 of the Hart Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled ''Reassessing Solitary Confinement II: The Human Rights, Fiscal, and Public Safety Consequences.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 3:30 p.m., to hold a Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs subcommittee hearing entitled, ''Lebanon at the Crossroads.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Subcommittee on Oversight of the Committee on Environment and Public Works be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on February 25, 2014, at 2 p.m., in room SD–406 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing, entitled, ''Natural Resource Adaptation: Protecting ecosystems and economies.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE NATIONAL INTEGRATED DROUGHT INFORMATION SYSTEM

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 307, H.R. 2431.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2431) to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I further ask that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 2431) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2014

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, February 26, 2014; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following any leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business for 2 hours, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half; and that following morning business, the Senate proceed to S. 1982, the veterans' benefits bill, postcloture; further, that all time during adjournment and morning business count postcloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1982.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:34 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, February 26, 2014, at 9:30 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate February 25, 2014:

THE JUDICIARY

JAMES DONATO, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA.

BETH LABSON FREEMAN, OF CALIFORNIA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA.

JAMES MAXWELL MOODY, JR., OF ARKANSAS, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

CELEBRATING POINT REYES FARMSTEAD CHEESE COMPANY

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company on the occasion of the company's recognition by Sand County Foundation, the California Farm Bureau Federation and Sustainable Conservation as the recipient of the prestigious 2013 California Leopold Conservation Award. Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the Leopold Conservation Award recognizes extraordinary landowner achievement in voluntary stewardship and management of natural resources.

Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company and its owners, the Giacomini Family, have prioritized healthy landscapes, clean waterways and a clean-energy future. Rotational grazing of their cows keeps soils healthy and helps prevent harmful erosion, and their methane digester produces renewable energy to power their dairy and cheese facility.

Please join me in congratulating the Giacominis and Point Reyes Farmstead Cheese Company on this important recognition and for the lasting impact their conservation policies will have on California's ranching community and its environment.

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect and sincere admiration that I rise today to celebrate Black History Month and its 2014 theme—Civil Rights in America, focusing on the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This year's theme reflects on the many courageous individuals who fought for an end to discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Through the passage of the Civil Rights Act, discrimination was outlawed in public facilities including restaurants and hotels, ending the era of legal segregation in such establishments.

Leading up to the passage of the Civil Rights Act, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led the Civil Rights March on Washington fighting for, amongst other ideals, meaningful civil rights legislation, including better employment opportunities and an end to segregation. This historic event led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which paved the way for future anti-discrimination legislation, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965. While there is more work to be done, we must follow in the footsteps of the great leaders of the Civil Rights Movement in order to ensure that every American is afforded equal opportunity and justice.

This month and always, it is important that we honor and celebrate America's greatest advocates for equal rights and civil liberties, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Dubois, and Thurgood Marshall, and to remember the extraordinary contributions of organizations including the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the Congress for Racial Equality, as well as many others which have played such a critical role in changing the landscape of American society for the better. As we pay tribute to these heroes of African American history, let us remember their profound perseverance, sacrifice, and struggle in the fight for freedom and equality which has shaped our great nation.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you and my distinguished colleagues join me in celebrating Black History Month and honoring those who fought, and those who continue to fight, for civil rights and justice. Through the efforts of these honorable individuals, we are reminded how far we have come as a nation, while realizing there is still progress to be made.

HONORING HARRISON RAMSDEN

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Harrison Ramsden. Harrison is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 314, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Harrison has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Harrison has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Harrison has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Harrison Ramsden for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

RECOGNIZING THE HONORABLE FLOYD ADAMS

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of the late Honorable Floyd Adams, Jr. of Savannah, Georgia. Mr. Adams was a long time leader in our community, and I was fortunate to work closely with him for many years. Floyd was the first African-American mayor of Savannah, holding office from 1996 until 2003.

Floyd began his career running the Savannah Herald, a weekly newspaper covering the African-American community in Savannah that his father started in 1945. He found his calling in public service and ran for the Savannah City Council in 1982. He represented the First District on the City Council until 1995, when he decided to run for mayor of Savannah. He won the election, becoming the 63rd mayor of Georgia's oldest city and taking command during an important time in Savannah's history. He ran again in 1999, facing no opposition and serving the city and its great people until 2003, when term limits prevented him from running again.

Floyd came into office in January of 1996 as the city prepared to do its part in the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Though the games were hosted in Atlanta, Savannah was the location of all sailing competitions. He witnessed an incredible expansion of Savannah's tourism industry, thanks in part to the success of John Berendt's bestseller "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil." He also led Savannah through the troubles of 1999's Hurricane Floyd, which caused mass evacuations throughout the Southeast. His leadership through times both good and bad should not be forgotten.

After his time as mayor, Floyd remained involved in Savannah politics. In 2008, he ran for the District 2 seat on the Savannah-Chatham County School Board and won. Floyd's continued support of Savannah and his unfailing determination to make the city a better place inspired many in our community. We all can learn from his example.

The Honorable Floyd Adams, Jr. died February 1, 2014. He was, and still is, an inspiration to the people of Savannah. He will be remembered as a fair and courageous leader. I am truly honored to be able to recognize the Honorable Floyd Adams, Jr. today, and I consider myself lucky to have called him a friend. He will be deeply missed by his community, friends, and family.

JOHN B. "JACK" NEWKIRK

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud John B. "Jack" Newkirk for his induction into the Jefferson County Business Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame recognizes outstanding area businesses, individuals, organizations and civic leaders from the past and present that have significantly impacted and contributed to the Jefferson County community.

One of Jack's greatest contributions to our community is his medical device inventions. He and his wife, Carol, started companies that distributed life-saving medical devices. These medical devices have improved the quality of life for thousands of people around the world.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Jack for his outstanding contributions to the world of medicine and well-deserved recognition from the Jefferson County Business Community.

IN HONOR OF THE BULLHEAD CITY BEE

HON. PAUL A. GOSAR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GOSAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the Bullhead City Bee's 24th anniversary. The Bee was established on December 27, 1989 and serves the cities of Bullhead City, Arizona and Laughlin, Nevada. The co-founders of the newspaper include Hilda Gay Zimmer, Jim Dir, and Thom McGraham, the current publisher. Many Bullhead City-area residents turn to the Bee for their local news, making this an important community newspaper.

Congratulations to the Bullhead City Bee on 24 years of success. May they find continued success for years to come.

IN MEMORIAM OF SARALEE MCCLELLAND KUNDE

HON. JARED HUFFMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. HUFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, we rise today in memory of Saralee McClelland Kunde, who passed away on January 26, 2014 after a long battle with cancer. In 1938, her parents, Robert and Lillian ''Sweet Lil'' McClelland purchased a milk route in Marin County and subsequently entered the dairy business, hand-milking 18 brown Swiss cows. Born in Marin Saralee hurled herself into the dairy operation and into 4-H, raising Holsteins and showing them at local fairs.

Revered as a superstar by others who work to promote the county's grapes, wines, milk and other bounty, and to preserve its ranch and farmlands, Kunde championed the Sonoma County Harvest Fair since its inception and was a key player in the Select Sonoma County marketing campaign and the Russian River Valley Winegrowers.

A generous philanthropist, Saralee rallied others to contribute to myriad Sonoma County causes, including the 4-H Center in Rohnert Park. Tireless and innovative, Kunde constantly enacted strategies to promote the Harvest Fair and the Sonoma County Fair, challenge and inspire youth involved in 4-H and Future Farmers of America, fortify cooperation among grape growers and other producers, and introduce the general public to the farm experience.

The depth of Saralee's commitment to agriculture in Sonoma County fueled many efforts to unite ranchers and farmers and to propel their products into national markets. She was a formidable force in uniting the diverse and often conflicting members of the agricultural community.

Mr. Speaker, Saralee Kunde's vibrant life is proof positive that one woman can make a difference. The legacy she leaves will not soon be forgotten as much of her legacy lives on all around us in Sonoma County and beyond. It is therefore appropriate that we pay tribute to her today and honor her memory.

HONORING SCOTT PATTON

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Scott Patton. Scott is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 314, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Scott has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Scott has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Scott has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Scott Patton for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONGRATULATING KENDALL COYNE ON WINNING THE SILVER MEDAL AS A MEMBER OF THE U.S. WOMEN'S HOCKEY TEAM AT THE XXII WINTER OLYMPICS IN SOCHI, RUSSIA

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ms. Kendall Coyne for competing and winning a silver medal as a member of the U.S. Women's Hockey Team at the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. I am very proud of Coyne's performance at the Olympic Games and honored to have her as a resident of Palos Heights, IL.

Born in Palos Heights, Illinois, Kendall Coyne from an early age dedicated her heart and soul to the sport she loves, hockey. When she was three years old, her mother tried to get her involved in figure skating, but Kendall would not have any part of it. Inspired by her older brother Kevin, Kendall laced up her hockey skates and played on boys' hockey teams until she joined the U–18 national team at the age of 15.

While other children her age would be playing with their friends or sleeping in on the weekends, Kendall would wake her parents up at six in the morning so that they could take her to the rink for practice. Not only is she a dedicated athlete, she is a full-time student. After graduating from Carl Sandburg High School, in Orland Park, Illinois, she attended the Berkshire School in Sheffield, Massachusetts for their post-graduate program. After graduating from Berkshire, Kendall was awarded a scholarship to play women's hockey at Northeastern University. At Northeastern, Kendall is studying communications and hopes to one day become a sports analyst.

At just 21 years of age, Kendall Coyne has been a three-time world championship medalist, a participant in four Nations Cups, a three-time U18 world championship medalist, a two-time Hockey East First-Team All-Star selection, and a Hockey East Rookie of the Year among many other distinctions. During the XXII Olympics, she scored two goals and recorded four assists while helping her team reach the gold medal game.

At 5′2″, Kendall Coyne is the shortest member of the U.S. women's national team. But what she might lack in height she makes up in dedication, perseverance, strength, agility, and drive. I am certain the tradition of success Kendall has established will continue for a long time to come.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the tremendous accomplishments of Kendall Coyne and to congratulate her and the entire U.S. Women's Hockey Team for winning the silver medal at the XXII Winter Olympics in Sochi.

HONORING MARY SIMON

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of myself and Representatives HONDA, ESHOO, and SPEIER to recognize the service of Ms. Mary Simon to San Jose and the Bay Area community.

Ms. Simon, the founder and executive director of Resource Area for Teaching (RAFT), will retire in the spring of 2014 after 20 years at its helm. She will greatly be missed.

After 12 years of teaching math and science to second and third graders, Ms. Simon founded RAFT in 1994 with a mission to help teachers transform children's learning experience through hands-on education. RAFT is a nonprofit organization that provides educators with prepared teaching kits and idea sheets for activities in mathematics, science, and art. Additionally, RAFT helps teachers access education specialists who can assist with planning lessons and projects as well as locate affordable teaching supplies.

Ms. Simon's remarkable vision had been to create a place that celebrates and supports great teaching. Through her hard work, Ms. Simon was able to bring together countless volunteers, donors, and companies to collaborate in this effort. Under her leadership, thousands of teachers joined RAFT to improve the quality of education in the Bay Area.

Under Ms. Simon's guidance, RAFT became an important resource for educators and continues to foster community involvement. With Ms. Simon's effort and unwavering commitment, RAFT grew into a 10,000-member organization and continues to enrich the education experience of hundreds of thousands of students. RAFT's products, services, and

teaching supplies improve the educational experience of over 825,000 kids per year.

We wish to congratulate Ms. Mary Simon on her impressive and impactful career and commend her years of service to the San Jose and the Bay Area community generally. Continued efforts and innovation in education of generations to come must be one of our top priorities as a nation, and Ms. Simon's efforts in this area are invaluable.

Ms. Simon worked to create a place where teachers could come together for the support and respect for the important, essential work that they do for our children. Because of Ms. Simon's vision, creativity, and dedication, RAFT will continue to make a positive impact on our educators and students. Ms. Simon's service has made our community a better place, and she will be dearly missed.

GARY WINK

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Gary Wink for his induction into the Jefferson County Business Hall of Fame and for his outstanding career in the Golden business community.

Gary served for 22 years as an executive and President and CEO of the Golden Chamber of Commerce. During that time, the membership of the Chamber more than doubled. Gary expanded the Golden Fine Arts Festival into an event ranking in the top 50 festivals in the nation, and he developed the Golden Farmers Market, one of the finest in Colorado.

Gary's leadership at the Golden Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in securing a thriving business climate that Golden continues to enjoy.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Gary on his contributions to the Golden business community and his well-deserved honor from the Jefferson County Business Community.

IN HONOR OF REPRESENTATIVE PAUL CLYMER

HON. MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, State Representative Paul Clymer is a principled leader, a man of character, veteran, and strong advocate for the citizens of the 145th legislative district of Bucks County, Pennsylvania. We honor his service to our country, state and community, as we also recognize his leadership in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, where he chairs the Education Committee and is a member of the Gaming Oversight Committee. Representative Clymer plans to retire at the end of the year, having served in state office for 34 years. An avid historian, he was responsible for developing funding strategies for the restoration and preservation of 85 of 147 Civil War monuments on the historic Gettysburg, Pennsylvania battlefield. Additionally, he is chairman of the committee working to preserve the historic integrity of the state Capitol building, its architecture, furniture, paintings and artifacts. On these and other issues important to the people he represents, namely, open space, farmland preservation, public transportation, gaming, veterans affairs, business and jobs, Representative Paul Clymer rises above the crowd, and in so doing, has set an outstanding example for others to follow.

HONORING GRANT BESS

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Grant Bess. Grant is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 314, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Grant has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Grant has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Grant has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Grant Bess for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

CONGRATULATING THE LEMONT HIGH SCHOOL VARSITY CHEERLEADING SQUAD ON WINNING THE 2014 MEDIUM DIVISION ISHA CHEERLEADING STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

HON. DANIEL LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Lemont High School Varsity Cheerleading Squad. On February 8th, the squad competed in the 2014 IHSA Medium Division Cheerleading State Championship at the U.S. Cellular Coliseum in Bloomington, IL and placed 1st in their division. I appreciate all of the incredible hard work and dedication this squad has put into their performance and would like to congratulate them on this tremendous team achievement.

The Lemont High School Varsity Squad comprises 19 members which includes Seniors: Madison Detres, Emily Durham, Gianna Letizia, Miranda Neumann, Rebecca Peraino, Kelsey Tate, Gianna Turek, and D.J. Wohead, Juniors: Easton Kral, Reann Kwasneski, Elly Lambert, Nicole Markley, Stephanie Markley, Kayly Norris, Samantha Palumbo, Jenna Polk, and Samantha Walus, Sophomores: Erin Cliff and Katelyn Papierski, and Freshman: Caitlyn Henry.

This squad under the guidance of head coach Dave Erlenbaugh, has had a very successful competition season leading up to the ISHA Cheerleading State Championships. Notable wins include their 1st place finish at both Sectionals and the Winter Meltdown Competition.

Lemont's varsity squad has made 9 consecutive final appearances at the IHSA State Championships and won the title in 2009, 2010, and 2011. This most recent win only adds to their excellent competition record.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing this impressive accomplishment made by the Lemont High School Varsity Cheerleading Squad and to congratulate them on their state championship win.

RECOGNIZING CAMDEN COUNTY, GEORGIA

HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Camden County, GA in light of their recent designation as a Coast Guard Community. Camden is the first county in the nation to be given this distinguished distinction, as it normally only is given to cities. Camden, however, is such a great supporter of the Coast Guard, its personnel, its families, and its mission that the award was given to the county as a whole.

Camden County is incredibly rich in history. Founded on February 5, 1777, it is one of the oldest counties in Georgia. It was named for Charles Pratt, Earl of Camden, who was an Englishman in favor of the American Independence. Modern day Camden County includes the cities of St. Mary's, Woodbine, and Kingsland and is home to Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay. Kings Bay is the Atlantic Fleet's home port for U.S. Navy's ballistic missile nuclear submarines, the Ohio-class. It also is home to Cumberland Island National Seashore, a National Wilderness Area.

With this honor, Camden County and its cities join 15 other cities to earn this designation, but Camden is the only to be labeled a Community. The designation was supported by the Congressional committees that oversee the Coast Guard and by the Coast Guard headquarters in Washington, D.C. The Coast Guard plays a major role in insuring the safety and security of Camden County and the Georgia Coast. Two teams are stationed in Camden County: the Maritime Force Protection Unit, which protects Navy assets at Kings Bay, and the Maritime Safety and Security Team 91108, which was established following the 9/11 attacks.

This honor would not have been possible without the strong support of many groups in Camden County. The Camden Partnership, which was created to support both Navy and Coast Guard members in Camden, made visits to 210 congressional offices to support restoring the Coast Guard budget when the group faced budget cuts. The Coast Guard Community of Camden organizes events and programs in support of Coast Guard members and families. The local Navy League awards its Coast Guard Sailor of the Year, and the Chamber of Commerce supports a military member of the month.

Camden County is a proud community and a model for the nation. I consider myself fortunate to represent such an incredible group of

people, and I am thankful for the hard work and tireless dedication they display for the men and women who protect us.

DR. CYNTHIA STEVENSON

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Dr. Cynthia Stevenson for her outstanding contribution to the Jefferson County School District and her induction into the Jefferson County Business Hall of Fame.

The Hall of Fame recognizes area businesses, individuals, organizations and civic leaders from past and present that significantly impacted and contributed to the Jefferson County community.

Cindy has been a part of Jefferson County schools most of her life as a student, a teacher, principal and superintendent.

As a result of her leadership, Jefferson County Schools thrived. Her dedication and commitment to providing the highest quality education to our kids will benefit our community for years to come. I am proud to call Cindy my friend and thankful for her public service.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Dr. Stevenson on her contributions and I am deeply grateful for the legacy of excellence she has given to our community.

RECOGNIZING THE EVENTS OF FEBRUARY 26, 1996

HON. TIM RYAN

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I join my colleagues and people all over the world in recognizing the tragedy which occurred on February 26, 1992 in the small Azerbaijani town of Khojaly. The attack resulted in the deaths of 613 Azerbaijani civilians and is one of the most devastating acts of violence in the South Caucasus in recent history. According to some accounts, the fate of 150 Khojaly inhabitants is still unknown, even after twenty-one years.

The numerous casualties in the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan underscore the need for a political-rather than a military-solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. A fair and comprehensive settlement is the most effective tool to encourage stability, prosperity, and a lasting peace in the region. As co-chair of the Minsk Group, the United States remains committed to working with both sides to that end. With that goal in mind, we remember and mourn the 613 victims of Khojaly and work together to safeguard the human rights of all.

HONORING JORDAN BENNETT

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Jordan Bennett. Jordan is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 444, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Jordan has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Jordan has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Jordan has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project. Jordan built a planter and a bench in the vegetable garden at Harvesters Community Food Network, a local food bank in Kansas City, Missouri.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Jordan Bennett for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

ADDRESSING AFROPHOBIA IN EUROPE

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the European Parliament's February 20, 2014 public hearing on Afrophobia, as well as the critical importance of continuing to work with the European Union (EU) to address racism and discrimination against Black Europeans. It has been organized by the Green Party in collaboration with the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) and the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR).

An estimated seven to ten million individuals of African descent currently live in Europe, particularly in France, the United Kingdom, and The Netherlands. These populations form an influential part of the African Diaspora. From labor and scholarship to politics and civil rights, they have contributed greatly to European history and culture over the past several centuries. However, the story of Black Europeans remains widely untold, rendering many of their past and present contributions to the political and social life of Europe invisible or forgotten. Furthermore, similar to the experiences of many African Americans, they have increasingly become the targets of discrimination, pernicious racial profiling, and violent hate crimes impacting equal access to housing, employment, education, and justice.

I commend Members of the European Parliament Jean-Jacob Bicep, Jean Lambert, and Philippe Lamberts of the Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA) for building upon previous efforts and hosting a public hearing on Afrophobia in the EU. As the Ranking Democratic Member of the Helsinki Commission, I have long worked with European policymakers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community leaders to help address inequality and discrimination facing persons of African descent.

In November 2013, the U.S. Helsinki Commission hosted an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) delegation of Black European Rights Leaders representing 10 countries.

During a Commission briefing, entitled ''Europeans of African Descent 'Black Europeans': Race, Rights, and Politics,'' members of the delegation shed light on the challenges encountered by many Black Europeans due to ongoing racism and discrimination, including barriers to greater political representation and leadership opportunities. Furthermore, they drew attention to the need for increased cooperation between Europe and the United States to combat racial discrimination and continuing racial disparities.

In conjunction with the Delegation's visit, I introduced H. Res. 421 ''Recognizing People of African Descent and Black Europeans'', which outlines concrete steps that the United States can take to help address racism and discrimination in Europe. It calls for the adoption of a Joint U.S.–European Union Action Plan to develop transatlantic solutions to combat racial discrimination and promote racial equality in Europe.

In addition, I sent a letter to President Obama on December 20, 2013 urging him to sign a Presidential Memorandum on ''International Initiatives to Advance Human Rights, Social Inclusion, Equality, and Empowerment of Peoples of African Descent.''

Mr. Speaker, Europe is currently grappling with complex questions at the intersection of national identity, decreasing birth rates, increasing immigration, security concerns, and a rise in extremist political parties. Cooperation between the United State and the EU is key to addressing the global challenges of racism and discrimination, and we should recognize the efforts made by the EU to address them.

HONORING CAPTAIN ERNEST T. NORDMAN

HON. JASON T. SMITH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Captain Ernest T. Nordman of Cape Girardeau, Missouri for his outstanding achievements and exemplary years of service to our Nation.

Captain Nordman is being awarded the prestigious Manion Award for Officer Logistician of the Year. The award is named after 1st Lieutenant Travis Manion, a Marine logistician who was killed by enemy sniper fire in Iraq in 2007. This award honors outstanding leadership skills, exemplary actions and overall conduct. I would like to congratulate Captain Nordman for this distinguished achievement and his honorable service. I am tremendously grateful for the dedicated men and women who have dutifully served our country, and among them leaders such as Captain Nordman who have risen as admirable leaders. It is my pleasure to recognize his achievements before the House of Representatives.

RECOGNIZING TALENTED SCIENTISTS AT FORT SETTLEMENT MIDDLE SCHOOL

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the talented young scientists at Fort Settlement Middle School in Sugar Land, Texas. Students Anish Mago, Siddanth Arora, Nithin Parsan, Dillion Ding and their science teacher, Karen Staley, were named first place winners in the 2014 Mars Rover Celebration.

The Mars Rover Celebration is an annual competition that invites students interested in science and engineering to participate in the design and construction of a Mars Rover model that would carry out a specific mission. The Fort Settlement students' mission was to colonize Mars. The team's working model ''Amazement'' earned them first place in the solar-powered rover division. Having grown up in Clear Lake, near the Johnson Space Center, I too was interested in space exploration as a young student. At a time when America needs more talent in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, it's great to see this enthusiasm for space exploration in our future scientists and leaders.

On behalf of all of everyone from the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, I'm proud to recognize these young scientists. Congratulations to the Fort Settlement Middle School team on earning this impressive accomplishment. I hope one day to see you all on your own mission to Mars. In this case, the sky is not the limit.

HONORING ZACHARY BISCHLER

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Zachary Bischler. Zachary is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 314, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Zachary has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Zachary has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Zachary has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Zachary Bischler for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

HONORING THE DELAWARE RIVER YACHTSMEN'S LEAGUE

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the upcoming 100th Year Anniversary of the founding of the Delaware River Yachtsmen's League (DRYL). Founded in 1914, the DRYL is committed to promoting true Yachtsmanship on the Delaware River, its tributaries and surrounding territory.

The DRYL started with a mere five founding clubs, and now contains 35 clubs along with six boating organizations. Over 5,000 boating members support one another in their commitments of successful club activities, working for cleaner waterways, and staying abreast of developing issues and laws.

I ask you and my other distinguished colleagues to join me in commending the Delaware River Yachtsmen's League for this distinguished milestone in its already impressive history. May we all seek to emulate the League's culture of dedication and hard work.

RECOGNIZING DEPUTY SHERIFF CHAD R. KOWALCZYK FOR HIS BRAVERY AND SELFLESSNESS IN THE LINE OF DUTY

HON. SEAN P. DUFFY

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. DUFFY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Taylor County Deputy Sheriff Chad R. Kowalczyk for his bravery, selflessness, and quick thinking in the line of duty while responding to a call on September 8, 2013.

Deputy Kowalczyk responded to a call of an armed suspect who had several hostages. Upon arriving at the scene, Deputy Kowalczyk requested back-up.

When the suspect began firing shots at Deputy Kowalczyk, he retreated to a position of cover and attempted to warn the responding officers of the situation. Unable to make radio contact, Deputy Kowalczyk decided to leave his position of cover to get to his squad car, knowingly putting his life in jeopardy.

When Deputy Kowalczyk broke cover, he was struck by a round in his left abdomen.

Deputy Kowalczyk made it to his car and radioed the other officers alerting them of the situation. When they arrived at the scene, they found Deputy Kowalczyk taking up a tactical position, despite his serious injuries.

Mr. Speaker, Deputy Kowalczyk may not agree with me, but he is a hero. His quick thinking and selflessness not only saved his fellow officers, but the family held hostage in their home. Please join me in thanking Deputy Kowalczyk once again for his bravery, selflessness, and quick thinking in the line of duty.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES RESOURCE CENTER

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Developmental Disabilities Resource Center (DDRC) for receiving the Non-Profit of the Year award from the West Chamber serving Jefferson County.

For 50 years DDRC has been providing support and opportunities to people with developmental disabilities and their families in Jefferson County. From their humble beginnings in church basements, DDRC has grown to 550 employees and more than 200 volunteers who make a difference in the lives of more than 3000 individuals each year.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Developmental Disabilities Resource Center (DDRC) for this well deserved honor from the West Chamber serving Jefferson County. Your dedication to our community enhances all of our lives.

CONGRATULATING COACH STEVE JENKINS ON HIS 600TH WIN

HON. BILLY LONG

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. LONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Coach Steve Jenkins on his 600th career win as head coach of Evangel University's men's basketball program.

Coach Jenkins reached this impressive feat in his 32nd season at Evangel University, a small Christian college in Springfield, Missouri. With this win, Coach Jenkins is now only the seventh active coach in the NAIA–I division to reach 600 wins.

Through his 30-plus seasons as head coach, Coach Jenkins' teams reached the NAIA national tournament 11 times, including a National Championship in 2002. His teams have captured seven Heart of America conference titles. He was honored as the NAIA National Coach of the Year in 2002, and was named Heart of America Athletic Conference Coach of the Year on six different occasions. Coach Jenkins was inducted into the Springfield Area Sports Hall of Fame in 2011 and the Missouri Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2013. On March 18, 2014, he will be inducted into the NAIA Hall of Fame.

Coach Jenkins' legacy at Evangel University extends beyond his record as a basketball coach. A 1974 Evangel graduate, Coach Jenkins lettered in baseball for 4 years and basketball for 3 years. After pursuing graduate studies, he soon returned to Evangel in 1977 as head baseball coach for 6 seasons, and assistant basketball coach for 5 seasons. He was named head basketball coach in 1982, and on December 5th of this season, coached his 1000th game at Evangel University. In 1998, Coach Jenkins added the responsibility of being the men's golf coach, and is serving in that capacity for the 16th year. He has garnered two Heart of America Coach of the Year honors for men's golf. Steve and his lovely

wife Rhonda, also a graduate of Evangel, have three grown children—Sarah, Jon, and David—and six grandchildren.

Coach Jenkins' exemplary devotion to coaching is only matched by his devotion in the classroom, his love of his family, and his strength in his faith. The Springfield community is justifiably proud of Coach Jenkins and the Evangel basketball program. I urge my colleagues to join me in congratulating him on his well-deserved victory.

HONORING BORIS TRAJKOVSKI

HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Boris Trajkovski.

As the founder and chair of the Congressional Caucus of Macedonia and Macedonian-Americans, and having one of the largest Macedonian communities in my district, I would like to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the tragic and untimely passing of Macedonia's president Boris Trajkovski, who was a great friend to the United States and the American people.

President Trajkovski and his entourage were en route to an international investment conference when his plane crashed near Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina on February 26, 2004. President Trajkovski, aged 47, left behind a wife, Vilma, and two children, Sara and Stefan. His gravestone in Macedonia reads a Biblical verse: ''Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.''

As a member and pastor of the Methodist Church of Macedonia, President Trajkovski was a tireless advocate for religious tolerance, religious freedom, and conflict resolution. He was a man of great faith. His great faith drove him to be a man who led reconciliation throughout his region of the world. In 2002, he was awarded the World Methodist Peace Award by the World Methodist Council for his role in promoting peace and political stability.

At his inauguration ceremony in 1999, President Trajkovski promised: ''I intend to be the president of all citizens of Macedonia, regardless of their ethnic or religious background, regardless of their political standing. I shall not allow ethnic hatred and intolerance to undermine Macedonia's stability.'' While deputy foreign minister, he supported U.S. and NATO-led efforts against Serbia, and allowed for NATO troops to be stationed in Macedonia, during which time Macedonia took in 400,000 Kosovar refugees.

President Trajkovski demonstrated his willingness to work with all of Macedonia's ethnic groups, which helped to prevent a civil war. He worked to foster peace and integrate Macedonia into the international community.

Under President Trajkovski's leadership, Macedonia was one of the first nations to publicly support NATO-efforts in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom and send troops to both, and under his leadership, Macedonia negotiated an agreement with the United States under Article 98 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, signed the agreement on June 30, 2003, and ratified the agreement on October 16, 2003, thereby helping to ensure United States citizens will not be subject to politically motivated prosecutions.

On March 11, 2004, the House of Representatives passed H. Res. 540 expressing the deepest sympathies and solidarity of the American people to the Macedonian people.

As a tribute to President Trajkovski, then-President Bush and then-Secretary Powell recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name Republic of Macedonia, on November 4, 2004.

President Trajkovski's legacy remains today. His wife Vilma has dedicated her life to working to continue his work in bridging youth of all ethnic groups, promoting peace and dialogue, and religious freedom among all, and she is a tireless advocate for breast cancer research. His daughter, Sara, currently works at the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The American people will forever remember President Trajkovski's friendship, and I hope that one day his dream of Macedonia joining NATO and the EU will become reality.

HONORING NORM HARTY

HON. JASON T. SMITH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Norm Harty, who nearly 50 years ago pioneered the technique of using dynamite to clean the inside of a power plant boiler, in order to remove slag deposit. Power plants burning any type of fuel, except natural gas, eventually build ash that creates slag deposits on the tubes running through boilers. This build up can create inefficiency in the operation of a power plant, requiring more fuel to be used to reach the same output a clean boiler could produce, not to mention being a safety hazard as well. The advances Norm and his company helped create in boiler cleaning technology have made their mark.

In 1964 Norm started his own business, N. B. Harty, and hired his first employee. Now 50 years and more than 4,500 jobs later Harty is still running his company which is regarded as the number one explosive cleaning company in the world. Norm has done business in all 50 states in the United States and in Canada, Mexico and Korea.

In addition to his business achievements, Norm and his late wife Billie, have contributed much to their community of Dexter, Missouri.

For the advances Norm and his company helped create in boiler cleaning technology, and his many other contributions to the community, it is my pleasure to recognize his efforts and achievements before the House of Representatives.

CONGRATULATING WILLIAM HOMALON

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate William Homalon, a senior at Morton Ranch High School in Katy, TX, on bringing home a gold medal from the University Interscholastic League State Wrestling Championship. William is one of the 28 talented wrestlers from Katy to qualify for the state tournament.

William is a repeat state champion, finishing his senior year with an impressive record of 51–3. He went undefeated at this year's state tournament, pinning all four of his opponents to capture the gold in the 126 lb. division.

Texas is home to many outstanding athletes, and becoming a state champion is not an easy feat. Becoming one twice is extraordinary. On behalf of all residents of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, I am honored to recognize William's accomplishment! Our community is proud of William Homalon.

HONORING CLAYTON SHRUGA

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GRAVES of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Clayton Shruga. Clayton is a very special young man who has exemplified the finest qualities of citizenship and leadership by taking an active part in the Boy Scouts of America, Troop 314, and earning the most prestigious award of Eagle Scout.

Clayton has been very active with his troop, participating in many scout activities. Over the many years Clayton has been involved with scouting, he has not only earned numerous merit badges, but also the respect of his family, peers, and community. Most notably, Clayton has contributed to his community through his Eagle Scout project.

Mr. Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in commending Clayton Shruga for his accomplishments with the Boy Scouts of America and for his efforts put forth in achieving the highest distinction of Eagle Scout.

HONORING CAPTAIN CHARLES R. BURROWS FOR HEROIC ACHIEVEMENT

HON. SEAN P. DUFFY

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. DUFFY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the Navy Commendation Medal to Captain Charles R. Burrows for heroic achievement while serving as an F Division Junior Officer, Secondary Battery Officer, 5th Division Officer, and Senior Officer of the Deck Underway from December 1942 until September 1945.

During his service, Captain Burrows participated in fourteen major operations against the enemy while stationed aboard the USS *Tennessee* in the South Pacific.

As stated by Captain Burrow's commanding officer, John B. Heffernan, Captain Burrows, ''by his initiative, perseverance, outstanding ability, and the foresight with which he anticipated developments, he planned, trained, directed, and maintained a secondary battery organization which met the most exacting requirements of the operations in which the USS *Tennessee* participated.''

Captain Burrows demonstrated immeasurable heroism during the Saipan and Okinawa campaigns when the USS *Tennessee*

was under continuous heavy attack from opposition battleships as well as kamikaze air attacks.

By his exceptional ability, personal initiative and unwavering dedication to duty, Captain Charles Burrows upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in honoring Captain Burrows and thanking him for his courage and his service to our country.

HONORING MR. JIM BRICKER ON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. CATHY McMORRIS RODGERS

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Jim Bricker, who has retired after over fifty years of service in Washington state. Throughout his career, Mr. Bricker has shown a passion for education policy, including serving on the Council for Higher Education, the Office of Financial Management, and the State Senate, where he worked as staff director of Committee Services. His interest in education reached into the classroom, where he spent 38 years teaching as an adjunct professor at the University of Puget Sound and at Pacific Lutheran University.

Serving his country as a colonel in the Marine Corps for 33 years, Mr. Bricker had the distinguished honor of being the Senior Officer in the Northwest for the past five years. His fervor for the integrity of the legislative process helped him play a critical role in major pieces of education legislation, including the founding of Evergreen State College in 1967. He later served in the executive offices of four governors, ending as Governor Gardner's Special Assistant for National Affairs.

For the past 22 years he worked as the Director of Government Affairs at PEMCO Financial Services, where he improved insurance policy. At age 50, Mr. Bricker ran his very first marathon, and continues to cultivate a passion for the outdoors and for physical exercise.

Even in retirement, Mr. Bricker remains dedicated to improving education and will continue to serve as a member of the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. A man of integrity and high principle, his humility and his impact on the state of Washington and on his country will long be remembered.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Mr. Bricker for a lifetime of dedicated service.

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION—JEFFERSON COUNTY

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Colorado State University Extension—Jefferson County for achieving 25 years of outstanding membership in the West Chamber serving Jefferson County.

Membership in a Chamber of Commerce comes with commitment, dedication and contribution to community. Chamber members are leaders in the community mentoring other businesses, creating positive environments for business to thrive. The West Chamber serving Jefferson County is a strong and vibrant organization today due to members like Colorado State University Extension—Jefferson County.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Colorado State University Extension—Jefferson County for 25 years of leadership and inspiration you provide in our community. I look forward to many more years of your service.

HONORING MR. JERRY L. SMITH

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a hardworking and self motivated man, Mr. Jerry L. Smith.

Mr. Jerry Smith was born in Hollandale, Mississippi on July 27, 1953 to Rev. C. B. and Hattie Smith. He was reared on a farm. He graduated from Anguilla High School in 1971 and in May 1975 from Mississippi Valley State University with a B. S. Degree in Industrial Technology.

Mr. Smith was enlisted in the U. S. Air Force as a Second Lieutenant from July, 1975 to August, 1978. In 1979, he started working for Asmco as a plant manager for 10 years. He started farming around 1994 and has been farming ever since. His motto is, ''In order to make your life better you have to get up each day and strive for that''.

Mr. Smith is married to Patsy Smith and to that union they have one child, Nicholas. He is an active member of St. Paul M. B. Church.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Jerry L. Smith.

IN RECOGNITION OF BETH HUNKAPILLER

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Beth Hunkapiller who has been named San Carlos Citizen of the Year for her outstanding and numerous contributions to San Carlos schools and the community at large. Beth is a 20-year veteran of the San Carlos School Board, and has worked tirelessly to ensure that our children have access to a quality education and to outstanding facilities.

Beth was instrumental in creating the San Carlos Charter Learning Center, the first charter school in California. She served as a founding member and chair of the State Board of Education's Advisory Commission on Charter Schools. She also served as the Department of Education's Charter School Division Director. She currently is the chair of the board of directors of Aspire Public Schools, the largest charter school organization in California.

It was Beth's experience as a parent that got her deeply involved in education. She was a volunteer teacher in her son's co-op nursery school and a Girl Scout Daisy troop coordinator. She later served as Heather PTA president, Heather Fun Day Chair, a member of an Ad Hoc Superintendent Selection Citizen Committee, and a campaign chair for the Committee to Defeat the Voucher.

After her election to the school board in 1993, Beth continued volunteering her time and expertise to the Healthy Cities Tutoring program which strives to help children who struggle to succeed in school. Beth was routinely re-elected by wide margins since 1993.

When it comes to supporting public schools, Beth Hunkapiller is at the head of her class. The San Carlos Education Foundation has been a success in large part because of its amazing volunteer parents, but also in part to one forever parent: Beth Hunlcapiller. Year after year, Beth and her husband Mike have been generous donors and have set the standard for philanthropy within any community. But Beth doesn't just write checks. She volunteers for the largest annual fundraiser, Spring Fling, and she lent her credibility as a school board member to volunteer efforts to raise funds from residents and businesses in and around San Carlos. She and her amazing husband, Mike, started ''Fund-A-Need'' ten years ago, an effort that is emblematic of their vision and generosity. The Hunkapillers have matched donations raised for specific needs such as science equipment, LCD projectors, smart boards, computers, iPads, PE needs, counseling and wellness programs, literacy specialists, calculators, musical instruments, art supplies and teacher development training.

I must also note, Mr. Speaker, that Mike Hunkapiller is an outstanding business leader and that his expertise contributed to modern science being able to efficiently sequence the human genome. It could be said of Beth and Mike that they are a real team. Mike figures out what makes us tick and Beth figures out how to make us tick better, through education.

No mention of Beth's record in education would be complete without mentioning her ceaseless efforts to support bond measures and parcel taxes. Beth is an advocate for fiscal responsibility, and in her role as a trustee, Beth was noted for asking important questions to ensure accountability by the administration for the funds that were raised. Beth realizes that education is the foundation of democracy, and a well-funded education is the foundation of every classroom. In public forums large and small, and literally across decades, Beth has lent tier voice and credibility to the effort to grow the capacity of the district to support new waves of children as they entered the schools.

Mr. Speaker, the schools in San Carlos are bursting at the seams, so much so that many new classrooms will soon be built. Young couples routinely mention the schools as their primary reason for moving into San Carlos. Beth is being named as the Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce, but the local realtors should name her salesperson of the century. The schools of San Carlos are beloved. Beth would be the first to note that it takes a remarkable team of parents and staff and administrators to create outstanding schools, but make no mistake, Beth deserves a fair share of the credit.

The Hunkapillers have raised their two children in San Carlos and their children graduated from Heather, Central, Menlo High School and Stanford. Their grandson now attends the Charter Learning Center. Beth is

also an active member of the San Carlos Rotary.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to rise with me to honor Beth Hunkapiller for her recognition by the Chamber of Commerce as Citizen of the Year. I couldn't think of a more deserving candidate. Beth is a beacon of public service and an inspiration to all of the residents of the City of Good Living, San Carlos, California.

CELEBRATING THE GRAND REOPENING OF THE VALLEY RANCH LIBRARY

HON. KENNY MARCHANT

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to recognize the completion of the Valley Ranch Library's renovation project. The library has been serving the citizens of Irving, Texas, since 1996 with an amazing collection of books, educational programs, and meeting spaces for community groups.

The history of the Valley Ranch Library begins in 1996 when it established its operations in a rental space no larger than 10,000 square feet. Following its opening, the library quickly became one of the busiest branches in the Irving Public Library system.

In June of 2006, the City of Irving initiated the construction project of a new 26,000 square foot library at 401 Cimarron Trail. In less than two years, the Valley Ranch Library celebrated its new facility at the grand opening ceremony in October of 2007. The new library brought new features to the community such as additional study rooms, public computers, and a café. Of the entire constructed facility, 5,000 square feet was left unfinished for future expansion.

In September of 2012, the citizens of Irving voted on a bond sale to complete the Valley Ranch Library, and in October of 2013, the library renovation project began.

The library expansion included more community meeting spaces, increased shelving by 20%, defined children's areas for a more comfortable experience of all ages, and the addition of a digital media lab.

The Valley Ranch Library is the second busiest and next-largest branch in the Irving Public Library system, after the Central Library. The library's surrounding community is composed of families focused on education; consequently, the library operates to meet and exceed the community's demand for educational resources and programs. The programs are often filled to capacity and patrons are known for maximizing their 50-book limit every three weeks.

Since the establishment of the facility in 2006, the Valley Ranch Library has grown significantly as demonstrated by the following statistics. The library has grown 72% in visitation, 26% in items checked out, 44% in collection size, 40% in reference requests, and 87% in public computer usage.

I am extremely appreciative of the City of Irving and the Irving Public Library system for continuing to address the needs of the community by enhancing the quality of their infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 24th Congressional District of Texas, I ask all my distinguished colleagues to join me in congratulating the City of Irving and Irving Public Library on the completion of the Valley Ranch Library's renovation project.

CHASE BANK LAKESIDE

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Chase Bank Lakeside for achieving 25 years of outstanding membership in the West Chamber serving Jefferson County.

Membership in a Chamber of Commerce comes with commitment, dedication and contribution to community. Chamber members are leaders in the community mentoring other businesses, creating positive environments for business to thrive. The West Chamber serving Jefferson County is a strong and vibrant organization today due to members like Chase Bank Lakeside.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Chase Bank Lakeside for 25 years of leadership and inspiration you provide in our community. I look forward to many more years of your service.

HONORING ANTHONY V. ''TONY'' HERZOG

HON. TOM MARINO

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. MARINO. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor Anthony Herzog, a member of my staff for the past two years who will be retiring from his position as a District Representative in my Hamlin Constituent Service Center. Tony, what most know him by, started in my office on June 2nd, 2012 and I was eager to put his knowledge and experience to use by helping me serve the people of Pennsylvania's 10th Congressional District.

Tony has an extensive public service record including having served as Wayne County Commissioner for 24 years. As commissioner, he was instrumental in numerous projects in Wayne County including, construction of the Wayne County Operations Center, the Wayne County Correctional Facility, and also the Recycling Center. Tony also served as director for the Wayne County Chamber of Commerce and worked to acquire the BL–2 No. 54 Locomotive, a showpiece in Honesdale, while also establishing the Stourbridge Line Rail Excursions.

Tony has also been active in numerous organizations and has held leadership positions in most of them, including: the Honesdale Lions Club, Boy Scouts Troop 1 100th Anniversary, the Fraternal Order of Eagles, Wayne County Family Center Board, NEPA Alliance, Wayne County Area Agency on Aging, Wayne County Drug and Alcohol Commission, Wayne County Conservation District and in 1998, Tony was appointed by the Governor to the PennDOT Transportation Advisory Committee. He also served as President of Herzog Trucking Company in Honesdale for 33 years.

Tony's influence can also be found in area sports as he is a strong supporter of both recreational and organized sports in Wayne County. He has been a player, coach, umpire and sponsor as his company, Herzog Trucking Company, sponsored numerous teams throughout the area. He was a member of the volunteer group that built Honesdale High School's first ever football field and bleachers in the 1970's and he assisted in the improvement of the County Sports Complex in Beach Lake, Pennsylvania.

Tony currently resides in Cherry Ridge Township with his wife, Sharon. They have two children: Andrea and Steven and three grand-children: Emma and Brady Herzog and Heather O'Hara.

Words cannot express how thankful I am to have had Tony as a member of my staff and how sad I am going to be to see him go. He has left a lasting impression and he will be truly missed by me, members of my staff, and the people of Pennsylvania's 10th Congressional District.

HONORING MANUFACTURING MATTERS

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the first graduates of Manufacturing Matters, a fast track training program in Richmond, Indiana.

The collaborative program is being spearheaded by Ivy Tech Community College WorkOne, and the Economic Development Corporations and Chambers of Commerce from Wayne, Rush, and Fayette counties to provide individuals the skills to succeed in the manufacturing industry. I am proud to announce that twelve people became the first graduates of this program on January 31, 2014. The first class includes Jarrod Andrews, Mary Ann Frazier, Bob Harding, Mark Hawkins, Marc Lechuga, Dylan McLemore, Darren McEwen, Rita Robinson, Chris Studt, Randy Tucker, Wilmi Vizcaino, and Kenny Warner.

Manufacturing Matters aims to cultivate a skillset that program participants can apply to future manufacturing jobs. The program provides hardworking individuals the opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding of manufacturing processes, safety, quality, and leadership.

In addition to the technical skills learned, the program participants attended a job fair to connect with potential employers. Manufacturing Matters has partnered with several organizations in Indiana from leading energy groups to local governments in an effort to employ the program graduates. The job fair matched employers with applicants who were ready for on-the-job success.

This program equips individuals with the tools to work and provides competent staff to businesses in the manufacturing industry. As a Member of Congress, I strongly support programs like Manufacturing Matters that strengthen the American manufacturing industry.

HONORING TECHNICAL SERGEANT JOSHUA COOMER

HON. JASON T. SMITH

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Technical Sergeant Joshua Coomer of Summersville, Missouri for his outstanding achievements and exemplary years of service to our Nation. Technical Sergeant Coomer first enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in May of 1999. During his career he served in two deployments, his first to Kuwait in 2000 and then to Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia in 2002.

On August 1st, 2014, Technical Sergeant will retire from the U.S. Air Force after honorably serving for 15 years. Throughout his career he has been recognized on numerous occasions for his distinguished leadership and commitment to uphold standards. He was named Military Training Leader of the Year in 2005, 2009, 2011, and 2012 in different groups for his outstanding performance in preparing future military personnel.

His superior officers speak very highly of him and I thank Mr. Joshua Coomer for his service to our Nation. It is my pleasure to recognize his achievements before the House of Representatives.

CONGRATULATING RICKY REGAS

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Ricky Regas, a junior at Cinco Ranch High School, on bringing home a gold medal from the University Interscholastic League State Wrestling Championship. Ricky is one of the 28 talented wrestlers from Katy, TX, to qualify for the state tournament.

Ricky captured this year's gold medal in the 182 lb. bracket after a hard-fought final match. Ricky finished the year with a record of 34–0, an undefeated season. I hope to continue to see great things from Ricky in his senior season.

Texas is home to many outstanding athletes, and becoming a state champion is not an easy feat. On behalf of all residents of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, I am honored to recognize Ricky's accomplishment. Our community is proud of Ricky Regas.

HONORING THE VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM IN HUNGARY AND AROUND THE WORLD

HON. ANDY HARRIS

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of the Memorial Day for the Victims of Communism in Hungary. On this day in 1947 the Soviet authorities occupying Hungary illegally arrested Bela Kovacs, the general secretary of the Independent Smallholders' Party, who, after being deported to the USSR and spending almost a decade in prison and labor camps died at the early age of 51. The arrest of this fellow Hungarian politician marked a new era in Hungary where the elimination of political opponents soon led to one-party dictatorship, and his fate symbolizes the tragic destiny of hundreds of thousands in Hungary whose rights were denied and whose lives were crushed by the evils of Communism.

As a son of an immigrant from Hungary who fled the same brutal regime that eliminated Bela Kovács, I know there are few among us who can give a firsthand account of the horrors of the soul-crushing Communist system. It is therefore all the more important that we officially remember the immeasurable damage caused by totalitarian regimes worldwide, and recognize that too many people of influence still subscribe to these same deadly ideas. Nostalgia toward Communism and the whitewashing of history is deplorable, and crimes committed during those times should never fade from our memory.

No leader in Europe today is a more outspoken advocate of remembering the crimes of the Communist system than Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who himself was instrumental in the underground movement that helped bring down Communism in Hungary. Hungary's leadership in facing and condemning its Communist past is exemplary. Hungary was first among the nations of Central and Eastern Europe to institute a memorial day for the Victims of Communism, and soon many nations followed.

The Hungarian Parliament has set out to remove the last vestiges of communism and open a bold new chapter defined by its own history and its own national sovereignty—which was dictated by outsiders for far too long.

Hungary's new Constitution declared that the crimes committed against the Hungarian nation under communist dictatorship has no statute of limitations, and it rejects the authority of the country's communist constitution of 1949—which made a mockery of the rights and freedoms it claimed to enumerate for its people.

Since last December, former victims of the state-party intelligence service now have the right to go public with the names of their surveillance agents and search the formerly closed archives. In a society plagued by the secrets of the Communists' crimes, truth is the only antiseptic, and it is the only source of reconciliation.

Inaugurated by the Orbán government more than decade ago, the House of Terror in Budapest, the former headquarters of the Communist State Police and a place synonymous with the brutalities of the dictatorship, today is one of the most visited museums in the world showcasing the everyday horrors of a dictatorial regime.

Overcoming the damages caused by 45 years of totalitarian Communism is not easy, but Hungarians are on the right path. In an era of political correctness which too often refuses to shame the shameful and to elevate selfless heroes, Hungary's leadership should be applauded.

COLORADO COMMUNITY MEDIA

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Colorado Community Media for achieving 25 years of outstanding membership in the West Chamber serving Jefferson County.

Membership in a Chamber of Commerce comes with commitment, dedication and contribution to community. Chamber members are leaders in the community mentoring other businesses, creating positive environments for business to thrive. The West Chamber serving Jefferson County is a strong and vibrant organization today due to members like Colorado Community Media.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Colorado Community Media for 25 years of leadership and inspiration you provide in our community. I look forward to many more years of your service.

HONORING MARK ALLAN SEGAL

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mark Allan Segal, one of the founding fathers of the gay rights movement and possibly the person most responsible for bringing national attention to that group's quest for acceptance and respectability.

By the age of eighteen Mark was an activist and founded Gay Youth, the nation's first organization to deal with the issues of gay teens and endangered LGBT youth. Then, realizing the gay community needed to be brought out into the open, Mark created the Gay Raiders and took his fight national by breaking into television newscasts and nationally broadcast live programs, always espousing gay rights. These break-ins were known as ''zaps'' and succeeded in making people aware of a part of our society that did not have equal rights under the law. The last known ''zap'' was one that took place on the CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite, and strange as it seems, Mark Segal and Walter Cronkite became and remained friends until Mr. Cronkite's passing in July of 2009.

Mark founded the Pride of Philadelphia Election in 1989 to build a coalition of gay activists and allies. He raised over $30,000 during the primary, waging a television ad campaign to defeat then City Councilman Francis Rafferty in order to elect allies to Philadelphia City Council, including then candidate for Mayor, Ed Rendell. Mark was also instrumental in obtaining funding from the late Congressman Thomas Foglietta in order to purchase a permanent home for the William Way LGBT Community Center, located in the heart of Philadelphia's ''Gayborhood''.

Mark is the founder of the Philadelphia Gay News and has become a respected journalist with his newspaper winning numerous awards. He is a tireless champion for his community making it his duty to make people understand

and respond to the issues at hand, never quitting the fight. And now, his latest project of bringing affordable housing to an aging gay population has reached fruition. The John C. Anderson Apartments, named for a Philadelphia City Councilman who died of AIDS in 1983, is now open. It is the first senior citizen housing project built by and for the LGBT community in Pennsylvania and only the third of its type in the United States. This is housing where gay tenants will feel comfortable living in a community that will not discriminate against them. But also, like the senior complexes built by Christian, Jewish and Chinese groups, this housing will be open to any eligible senior in need.

I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in commending Mark Segal for being at the forefront of a fight still taking place today. He is an outstanding example of unwavering commitment to equal rights, and we should all be thankful for his tireless dedication and determination.

TRIBUTE TO TERRY GILMORE

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to an individual whose dedication and contributions to the community are exceptional. Temecula has been fortunate to have dynamic and dedicated community leaders who willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent to make their communities a better place to live and work. Terry Gilmore is one of these individuals. On February 22, 2014, Terry was honored as the 2013 ''Citizen of the Year'' award recipient at the Temecula Chamber of Commerce Installation and Awards Gala.

Terry was born and raised in the thriving city of St. Louis, Missouri, as one of four children to parents with a blue collar background. Like them, Terry never went on to attend college, but instead gained his keen business sense from working at a bowling alley starting at a very young age. Terry developed his love for the sport of bowling while clearing out the pins at the back of the lanes and often earned free games as payment. As a youth, Terry became one of the top 10 amateur bowlers in the country.

The joy Terry found in bowling was put on hold when he received a draft card for Vietnam in 1966. He served his country proudly for over a year as an infantry radio operator. Immediately after returning from the war, Terry found that he was willing to move just about anywhere to follow his dreams. With $702 dollars in his pocket and a brand new Corvette, Terry moved from his hometown of St. Louis out west to the sunny city of Phoenix, Arizona for a new start.

Though Phoenix was still a very small town at the time of his move, Terry found his way in to a job at the local Dodge dealership, Scottsdale Dodge. Not only did he find passion in the job, but he also found love when he met a sales associate, named Cindy, who would eventually become his wife. Terry's commitment showed itself early in his career. He was the first to pick up extra shifts on weekends and holidays, all the while saving up to provide for his wife and family. He moved up within the dealership and soon decided to take a huge risk by moving out to Ventura, California in 1983 to get more experience in the automotive industry. Terry landed a job with Robert Gregory at Paradise Chevrolet, where his success eventually led him to take on the role as General Manager.

A mere eight years later, Robert Gregory was given the opportunity to open a new Chevrolet dealership in the then-small town of Temecula, California, and invited Terry to buy in as his partner. With hard work and dedication, Terry became the sole owner of Paradise Chevrolet after 20 years. Terry's attitude for success created a thriving business that earned him the ''Chevrolet Dealer of the Year Award'' for the entire United States in 2010.

It is hard to imagine that Terry would have any free time on his hands, yet he has always found time for his community. From Copy for Kids, serving in Chamber positions, and helping local Veterans, Terry truly has had a hand in developing organizations and groups that make our community great. He found his true calling, however, through the Boys & Girls Clubs of Southwest County. For over 20 years, Terry has helped the non-profit reach their fundraising goals, and currently serves on the Board of Directors, more specifically the Emeritus Board of Distinction. When asked why he remains so involved in these organizations, Terry stated, ''There is nothing more valuable than your time, so I decided to give mine.''

In his spare time, Terry enjoys spending time with his wife of over 30 years, their daughter who attends San Diego State University, and his daughter from a previous marriage, who still lives in St. Louis.

Considering all that Terry has done for the city of Temecula, the Temecula Chamber of Commerce named him their 2013 ''Citizen of the Year.'' Terry's tireless passion for service has contributed immensely to the betterment of our community. He has been the heart and soul of many organizations and events and I am proud to call him a fellow community member, American and friend. I know that many individuals are grateful for his service and salute him as he receives this prestigious award.

HONORING THE EDDIE WASHINGTON CENTER FOR 20 YEARS OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE IN LAKE COUNTY

HON. BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because the Eddie Washington Center for Men in Waukegan, Illinois, the largest city in the district I represent, has been helping men rise for 20 years in Lake County.

In 1993, Township Supervisor Patricia Jones united her community to renovate an old fire station and establish the Eddie Washington Center, a transitional home for adult men struggling with homelessness.

Taking a holistic approach, the Eddie Washington Center seeks to break the persistent cycle of homelessness and offer a hand up and push forward to the men who seek help. Stressing the spirit of giving back to the community, residents of the center offer services while learning skills to promote an independent, successful life. Some of these services further contribute to our community, including snow removal and lawn care for local seniors.

In addition to offering a safe, clean and nurturing resident environment, the Eddie Washington Center offers counseling, mentoring, vocational training and much more to effect positive change.

Homelessness is a stubborn condition, one that is incredibly difficult to break. The goal of the Eddie Washington Center, through hard work and innovative methods, is to break that lifestyle and set residents on a sustainable, positive path forward.

February is Black History Month, honoring the contributions and commitments of African American leaders to communities throughout the country. So too, let us honor the work of the staff and volunteers at the Eddie Washington Center. These dedicated men and women have devoted their time and energies to their community. Their example is one we can all follow, and their success with the Eddie Washington Center is something we can all celebrate.

Congratulations and thank you to the Eddie Washington Center on 20 remarkable years.

HONORING THE AHISKA TURKS

HON. STEVE CHABOT

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Congress from Ohio, I am proud of my state's diversity and the many cultures that make it such a great place to live.

One of the more active ethnic groups in Ohio is the Ahiska Turks, who are represented by the Ahiska Turkish American Community Center (ATACC). When the United States offered P–2 refugee status to this distinct minority group in Russia, to those who faced religious and ethnic persecution by the Russians, roughly 12,000 Ahiska Turks came to our country, and settled in Ohio, Illinois, Georgia, Idaho, Pennsylvania, New York, Oregon, Missouri, Kentucky, Florida, Texas, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Virginia.

Those who created new lives in Ohio learned English, established small businesses, educated their children, and revitalized neighborhoods. They invested over $30 million just in north Dayton alone, where dilapidated houses were transformed into an oasis of middle class dwellings. For example, the Dayton Community Center was a dying building which they bought and renovated. It now not only houses Ahiska Turkish American Community Center events, but it is also a flourishing neighborhood preschool.

Ahiska Turks are living the American dream not only in my state, but also around the country. In their efforts to open shops, and establish businesses in transportation and construction, for example, they have successfully accomplished what we often talk about here in Congress—they have created jobs.

But while these fortunate Ahiska Turks now live better and more prosperous lives here in the U.S., the lives of the Ahiska Turks in Russia are very different. Their children are segregated in schools and told they can never

"catch up" or integrate with their Russian counterparts. They continue to face widespread persecution and live under discriminatory laws. However, if these same people thrive once they come to the United States, and their children excel in school, then there is little doubt that the environment of hostility and discrimination in which they live in Russia is what is keeping them from meeting their real potential in that country.

As a result, I call on the State Department to restart the P–2 program so that those Ahiska Turks who continue to face persecution in Russia can come to the United States and rejoin their families. Ohio has benefited from their hard work, dedication, and family values. This program was a blessing for these wonderful people, and it was a good deal for the United States.

CHARLES CHURCH McKAY

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Charles Church McKay for his induction into the Jefferson County Business Hall of Fame.

Charlie is an outstanding member of the Jefferson County Business Community where he manages the development of residential and commercial real estate projects. His major ventures include the Rockwell International Training Center, the Church Ranch Corporate Center, the Smart Reservoir Expansion Project and the Candelas project in Arvada.

Additionally, Charlie serves on many community boards, offering his expertise to such organizations as the Jefferson County Economic Council board, the Northwest Metro Chamber of Commerce and Transportation Management Organization. He is the Chairman of Denver Boulder Corridor Marketing Coalition, the Historical Mandalay Community Center, Inc., the Broomfield Economic Development Council and the Founder and Chairman of Jefferson Center Metropolitan District.

Charlie and his family celebrate a rich Colorado legacy dating back to 1857, and I am pleased to see him continue a tradition of excellence. I extend my deepest congratulations to Mr. McKay for his well-deserved recognition from the Jefferson County Business Community.

RECOGNIZING THE 22ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE KHOJALY MASSACRE

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 22nd anniversary of the Khojaly massacre in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Khojaly, once the home to 7,000 people, was the site of the largest killing of ethnic Azerbaijani civilians in the course of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. On February 25, 1992, Armenian armed forces descended on Khojaly killing 613 people, of which 106 were women and 83 were children. Fifty-six people were reported to have been killed with extreme cruelty and torture. In addition, 1,275 people were taken hostage, 150 went missing and 487 people became disabled. Also according to records that have been maintained, 76 of the victims were teenagers, 8 families were wiped out and 25 children lost both of their parents while 130 lost one of their parents.

The extent of the cruelty of this massacre against women, children and the elderly was unfathomable. Today, the Nagorno-Karabakh region is under Armenian occupation, and this year's anniversary serves to remind us of the need to redouble efforts to help resolve the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. As the U.S., Russia and France are co-chairs of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) Minsk Group, which is charged with finding a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, we all must work diligently to bring about a swift end to this ongoing conflict.

The United States and Azerbaijan enjoy a strong partnership based on shared strategic interests. Our countries share many values, including a vision for greater diversity and tolerance as well as respect for minorities and gender rights. We have worked together to prevent the spread of extremism and Azerbaijan's vital contribution to the U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo cannot be understated. The United States, along with our European allies, also recognize Azerbaijan's leadership role in bringing stability to energy markets in the region and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, Azerbaijan is a strong ally and friend of the United States in a strategically important and complex region of the world. As Azerbaijanis around the world observe this painful chapter in their country's history and remember lost loved ones, let us remember our support of peaceful efforts to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and reforms that promote regional stability. I ask my colleagues to join me and our Azerbaijani friends in commemorating the tragedy that befell the town of Khojaly.

HONORING COMMANDER DON FINNEGAN

HON. LUKE MESSER

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. MESSER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Commander Don Finnegan from Muncie, Indiana.

Commander Finnegan is the State Director of Honor and Remember. This organization preserves the memory of those who have died to protect our freedom and presents personalized flags to families who have lost a loved one in service for our country.

In April of 2002, Commander Finnegan joined the Sons of American Veterans as a Chaplain at the Squadron level. Due to his participation in Sons of AMVETS, Mr. Finnegan became involved with an organization called Honor and Remember, and is now Indiana's first State Director.

In addition to Sons of AMVETS and Honor and Remember, Mr. Finnegan has served his community for the last 24 years in the volunteer fire services as well as the past 15 years as a member of Red Cross Disaster Services.

Commander Finnegan's character and example of service has impacted his family. Both of his sons, Shane and Ryan, have served in the Military as well as his daughter-in-law.

Men and women like Commander Finnegan deserve recognition for the service they provide to their communities and to our veterans. I am proud of the work Commander Finnegan has done for the state of Indiana.

CONGRATULATING CHRISTIAN MARTINEZ

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Christian Martinez, a senior at Katy High School, on bringing home a gold medal from the University Interscholastic League State Wrestling Championship. Christian is one of the 28 talented wrestlers from Katy, TX to qualify for the state tournament.

Christian, who took home a silver medal in 2013, captured this year's gold medal in the 132 lb. bracket after a hard-fought final match. Christian is the 10th state champion wrestler to come from Katy High School.

Texas is home to many outstanding athletes, and becoming a state champion is not an easy feat. On behalf of all residents of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, I am honored to recognize Christian's accomplishment! Our community is proud of Christian Martinez.

HONORING NICOLE MICHELE HINES

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, rise to honor the memory of Nicole Michele Hines, a woman who lived more life in her 38 years than most will live in a lifetime, and is remembered for stating, "My PASSION is greater than your power!"

Her advocacy for women's rights, fatherhood, community uplift and the foundation of family were just a few of the areas she fought for. Her association with organizations such as Holy Redeemer Health System's Project Rainbow/Drueding Center and the Women's Community Revitalization Project landed her prestigious spots on their boards and various committees. She lived and fought for the educational rights of her own children, Naim and Aminah, and for a village of others.

Nicole was a tireless champion for her community, always willing to serve in whatever capacity was needed, devoting endless hours to politics at both the city and state levels. She was elected Committee Woman for the 49th Ward, 5th Division, and worked diligently to help further the community's improvement and redevelopment. She was a strong supporter of the Logan CDC, serving as an active member of their Neighborhood Advisory Committee, and was actively involved in many organizations, among them but not limited to, the

Philadelphia Center for Art and Technology, Philadelphia Assisting Communities, the Community Women's Education Project and the Northwest Community Coalition for Youth. Her final project was advocating for the rights of fatherhood and the family as a united front, helping in the creation of the Father's Heart and Legacy Empowerment Center.

I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in remembering this extraordinary woman who has touched the lives of so many and has left behind a wealth of knowledge and a glowing legacy. She made it her duty to make people understand and respond to the issues at hand and would want all of us to continue her fight.

TRIBUTE TO GERRY AND ROSIE WILSON

HON. KEN CALVERT

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to two individuals whose ongoing dedication and contributions to the community of Temecula, California have been exceptional. Temecula has been fortunate to have dynamic and dedicated community leaders who willingly and unselfishly give their time and talent to make their communities a better place to live and work. Gerry and Rosie Wilson are two of these individuals. On February 22, 2014, Gerry and Rosie were honored as the "Lifetime Achievement Award" recipients at the Temecula Chamber of Commerce Installation and Awards Gala for all that they have done.

Born and raised in the heart of the Midwest, Rosie and Gerry came from humble beginnings. This foundation instilled quality values in the pair that are exemplified to this day. It was almost fate that Rosie and Gerry met one day on a train. She was on her way home to Iowa to celebrate Christmas with her family after having set up a cerebral palsy clinic in Boise, Idaho and he sat down across from her. Not too shortly after, they were walking down the wedding aisle, ready to begin their life together. In a matter of two and a half years, the pair had adopted a child and given birth to three more. Their children became their top priorities.

As their children grew older, however, the Wilson's aspirations grew bigger. At their children's suggestion, the couple began to consider opening a winery. Gerry had never been known as a big risk taker; in fact, he made his living as a financial advisor. He was careful to consider every aspect of this huge investment that may have required their entire life savings. After happening upon Temecula, California in 1996, Gerry and Rosie became convinced that this was the right move for them and their dream became a reality when they purchased a small winery named Wilson Creek Winery that same year.

In 1997, Gerry and Rosie's three children and their families picked up and moved to Temecula to begin working alongside their parents at the winery, which officially opened its tasting room doors in 2000. The family's values have contributed immensely to the success of the business. It is evident that each individual contributes a certain expertise to the day-to-day operations of the winery, creating a dynamic business model.

The Wilson's hard work and dedication have grown Wilson Creek Winery into an incredible business over the years. They have single-handedly created 20 fulltime, and 30 part time jobs. Today, the winery spans 90 acres from which they sell over 30,000 cases of wine each year. 1,000 visitors a weekend walk through the tasting room doors to experience the ambiance and wine the couple has worked so hard to create. For all of the growth and success Gerry and Rosie have contributed to Temecula, the Temecula Valley Chamber of Commerce awarded the winery "Gold Business of the Year" for 2004.

Not only have Rosie and Gerry contributed tremendously to the economic growth of the city, but they have always made sure to also give back to their community. Every year, the couple hosts a variety of charity events at Wilson Creek Winery, bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars to help local organizations and individuals in need. In 2004, The Wilsons hosted a benefit for families affected by a wildfire that came within two miles of the winery, raising $40,000 in one night. More recently, they have hosted fundraisers for the Junior Diabetes Foundation, Special Olympics, Rotary International, Alzheimer's research, and a local animal shelter.

The Wilson's tireless passion for service has contributed immensely to the betterment of the community of Temecula, California. I am proud to call Gerry and Rosie fellow community members, Americans and friends. I know that many individuals are grateful for their service and salute them as they receive this well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award.

CONGRATULATING CALEB HUFF, NAVSEA SAILOR OF THE YEAR

HON. BILLY LONG

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. LONG. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Navy Diver 1st Class Caleb Huff for his service to our nation and on receiving the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) 2013 Active Duty Sailor of the Year.

Caleb is based with the Navy Experimental Dive Unit located in Panama City, Florida. The mission of his unit is to develop solutions to enhance and improve manned operations in undersea and other extreme environments through biomedical research and testing and evaluating equipment and procedures.

Caleb was one of nine contenders selected from NAVSEA enlisted sailors to compete for the 2013 Active Duty Sailor of the Year. He won this tremendous honor after being interviewed by the NAVSEA committee over a five-day competition.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Caleb's family. His wife, Emily, and son, Mason, cheered him on as he competed for this honor and continue to provide him with support at home.

I am honored to recognize Caleb Huff for his service to our nation and on being awarded the NAVSEA 2013 Active Duty Sailor of the Year.

BANDIMERE SPEEDWAY

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud Bandimere Speedway for achieving 25 years of outstanding membership in the West Chamber serving Jefferson County.

Membership in a Chamber of Commerce comes with commitment, dedication and contribution to community. Chamber members are leaders in the community mentoring other businesses, creating positive environments for business to thrive. The West Chamber serving Jefferson County is a strong and vibrant organization today due to members like Bandimere Speedway.

I extend my deepest congratulations to Bandimere Speedway for 25 years of leadership and inspiration you provide in our community. I look forward to many more years of your service.

RECOGNIZING FLORIDA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

HON. DANIEL WEBSTER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. WEBSTER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize Florida Business Development Corporation for their contributions to the Central Florida business community.

Organized in 1989, Florida Business Development Corporation has grown to be the second most active Certified Development Company in the United States. The company works with private lenders to provide businesses with long-term, affordable financing that allows them to grow more quickly. Florida Business Development Corporation recently constructed a new building to accommodate its expansion, creating new employment opportunities for local residents and strengthening the economy.

Business development is essential to growing local economies and keeping hard-working Floridians employed. I commend Florida Business Development Corporation for their work to assist healthy, growing small businesses in Central Florida, and I wish them continued success.

IN RECOGNITION OF MICHAEL CALLAGY

HON. JACKIE SPEIER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Michael Callagy for his 29 years of exemplary service at the San Mateo Police Department, the last seven as Deputy Chief. He has been a tireless and effective advocate to enhance the relationship between the police and the community.

During his long career, Deputy Chief Callagy has supervised every unit in the department. He was assigned to investigations,

field operations, the special operations unit, the street crimes suppression team, robbery, the homicide and sexual assault unit, vice and narcotics, persons crimes investigator, property crimes investigator, community services, support services, SWAT, hostage negotiator, field training officer, oversight of public information officer, technology-related projects, narcotics unit, traffic enforcement, neighborhood response team, reserves and K–9 programs, major criminal investigations, internal affairs, crime analysis, communications, and records. In 2012, distressed by the high rate of recidivism, Deputy Chief Callagy formed the domestic violence unit to end the cycle of violence. As you can surmise from this long list, there isn't a task or field Deputy Chief Callagy can't tackle; however, narcotics and undercover work remain his specialty.

Michael Callagy was born in San Francisco and grew up in Daly City. He graduated from Serra High School in 1980. He earned a Masters in Public Administration from Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont and a law degree from Santa Clara University. In 2010, he received his Masters in Homeland Security and Defense from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey. He is a member of the California State Bar and a graduate of the FBI National Academy.

The efficiency and effectiveness of Deputy Chief Callagy's work has been widely recognized. He received awards from the San Mateo County Trial Lawyers Association, San Mateo County Gang Task Force, Governor Gray Davis' School Safety Wireless Phone Program, Avoid the 23, and San Mateo Police Activities League. The San Mateo Police Department awarded him the Gordon Joinville Special Merit Award for his leadership in developing youth services and programs. The District Attorney's Office has commended him for his outstanding skills in investigating and solving crimes.

Deputy Chief Callagy and his wife Lisa are the proud parents of four children, Brianna, Ryan, Shannon and Kevin.

Mr. Speaker, Deputy Chief Callagy's commitment to keep our communities safe has earned him the admiration and adoration of residents and his colleagues alike. While he will be deeply missed by the San Mateo Police Department, he will continue to serve and protect the residents of San Mateo County in his new role as Deputy County Manager. I ask the House of Representatives to rise with me to honor an outstanding public servant and first-class police officer.

RECOGNIZING THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust for receiving accreditation by the National Land Trust Accreditation Commission. The accreditation process is very rigorous and signifies the highest standards of excellence in land conservation.

When Congress first passed the tax incentives for land conservation, it placed a high degree of trust in non-profit land trusts to manage these transactions properly. Over the years, land conservation has become increasingly complex and requires careful adherence to the national Land Trust Standards and Practices. This accreditation process helps give taxpayers confidence that land trusts are a worthy public investment.

I want to thank the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust for its dedication and effectiveness in educating the public about the importance of conservation and preserving local natural areas, trails, streams, and parks. Its work helps to protect wildlife habitat, water quality and healthy communities. Since its founding 20 years ago, the Trust has protected 5,370 acres across Northern Virginia. And, by achieving national accreditation, the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust has expanded its capacity to accomplish this mission far into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in commending the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust for its hard work and commitment to our community. I wish the Trust and its supporters continued success in their conservation efforts.

TASTY BAKING COMPANY

HON. ROBERT A. BRADY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Tasty Baking Company, better known as TASTYKAKE, as it celebrates its 100th Birthday today. Since TASTYKAKE was formed, it has been an integral ingredient to the great city of Philadelphia, as well as surrounding areas along the East Coast.

TASTYKAKE was founded in 1914 by baker Philip J. Baur and egg salesman Herbert T. Morris. The brand name was originally conceptualized by Morris' wife commenting on how she found the duo's baked goods to be ''tasty.'' Starting in a small bakery in Philadelphia, and only using the finest and freshest of ingredients, the company quickly became a phenomenon.

TASTYKAKE, a wholly owned subsidiary of Flowers Foods, Inc., is a success story not only for Philadelphia, but for our nation as a whole. The company employs thousands, has multiple production locations in Philadelphia and Chester County, and contributes everyday to the success of America. From honey buns to chocolate bells, cupcakes to donuts, thousands of citizens are enriched by these tasty baked goods. TASTYKAKE is memorializing this special event by serving their goods to those who serve the citizens of Philadelphia, including local charities, police and fire departments, and customers. This act conceptualizes the American dream: that through hard work and dedication, everybody has a chance to make their dream succeed.

I invite you and all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Tasty Baking Company and offering our thanks to the company that has made many of our lives much sweeter.

HONORING THE LIFE OF DR. LESLIE M. COLLINS

HON. ALCEE L. HASTINGS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor and pay tribute to the life of Dr. Leslie M. Collins, a lifelong educator, writer, and academic. Dr. Collins was a well respected professor who was always available to guide his students as they embarked on their careers. I was deeply saddened to hear of his passing this week.

For more than 50 years, Dr. Collins taught English and African-American literature at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Even after his retirement in 1979, he continued to teach several courses every year for nearly three decades. His dedication to education speaks for itself.

A graduate of Dillard University, Dr. Collins was awarded an M.A. from Fisk University in 1937 and a doctorate from Western Reserve University's Department of American Culture in 1945. His studies of the relationships between the peoples of the world through literature took him across the globe, to the Universities of Havana, Oslo, Florence and Madrid, as well as Africa, Europe, and the Mediterranean.

In 1945, Dr. Collins joined the English Department at Fisk University, where he taught courses ranging from Composition to Black Literature, Milton, and the Harlem Renaissance. For nearly 50 years, he reviewed books for the Nashville Tennessean, and in 1990, received an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Fisk University. The same year, his work One Hundred Years of Fisk Presidents was published, and later, his poem the Creole Girl was set to music and performed by the Black Music Repertory Ensemble of Chicago.

Mr. Speaker, we have lost a great academic and a gifted educator. Dr. Collins dedicated his life to reviving students' relationships with literature, and I feel blessed to have known him as a mentor. This week, my thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends, the Fisk University community, and the countless students whose lives he undeniably touched.

COMMENDING JIM BROWNE

HON. PETE OLSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Jim Browne, the Director of Parks and Recreation for my hometown of Sugar Land, Texas, on being named the East Region 2014 Director of the Year by The Texas Recreation and Park Society, TRAPS. Browne was recognized by TRAPS for his professional leadership, public service and efforts to improve quality of life in Sugar Land.

Browne has worked to enhance Sugar Land by opening numerous parks and community centers as well as expanding the city's already award winning special events. Under Browne's leadership, Sugar Land opened the Imperial Park Recreation Center, doubled program

space for senior citizens at the recently renovated T.E. Harman Center and opened the first phase of the Sugar Land Memorial Park. These are just a few of the accomplishments Browne has achieved during his 35 year career in parks and recreation management.

On behalf of all residents of the Twenty-Second Congressional District of Texas, it's an honor to recognize Browne's commitment to the Sugar Land community. Congratulations Mr. Browne, on earning this recognition for your valued work and thank you for helping to create a community that the Sugar Land residents are proud to call home.

240 UNION

HON. ED PERLMUTTER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and applaud 240 Union for achieving 25 years of outstanding membership in the West Chamber serving Jefferson County.

Membership in a Chamber of Commerce comes with commitment, dedication and contribution to community. Chamber members are leaders in the community mentoring other businesses, creating positive environments for business to thrive. The West Chamber serving Jefferson County is a strong and vibrant organization today due to members like 240 Union.

I extend my deepest congratulations to 240 Union for 25 years of leadership and inspiration you provide in our community. I look forward to many more years of your service.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 20, 2009, the day President Obama took office, the national debt was $10,626,877,048,913.08.

Today, it is $17,411,178,036,656.28. We've added $6,784,300,987,743.20 to our debt in 5 years. This is over $6.7 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a balanced budget amendment.

REGARDING THE KHOJALY TRAGEDY

HON. VIRGINIA FOXX

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, since declaring its independence from the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has been a reliable friend and valuable ally of the United States. For this reason, it seems appropriate for Congress to commemorate the victims of the Khojaly tragedy as the Azerbaijani people mark the anniversary of this event.

Since the early 1990s, Azerbaijan has been involved in a conflict with its neighbor to the West, Armenia. The Khojaly tragedy was the single worst day in this conflict, resulting in hundreds of lives lost, families devastated, and the town destroyed. Given our deepening ties with Azerbaijan, it is important for Americans to remember this event.

A cease-fire was negotiated in 1994, but the conflict remains unresolved. I remain confident a resolution will be found. The United States is serving as a co-chair to the Minsk Group, along with France and Russia. Together these three nations are working to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

The anniversary of this horrible tragedy is an appropriate time to honor the victims of these atrocities and reflect on the need for all parties to work together to bring a swift end to this conflict. I urge my colleagues to join me in standing with Azerbaijanis as they commemorate this tragedy.

CONGRATULATING PASTOR H. LEE JORDAN, JR. ON HIS FOURTH PASTORAL ANNIVERSARY AND HONORING HIM FOR OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

HON. BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor my good friend, Pastor H. Lee Jordan, Jr. on the occasion of his fourth Pastoral Anniversary with Greater Faith Church—Baptist (GFC) in Waukegan, Illinois, part of the district I represent.

Pastor Jordan assumed leadership of the GFC in January 2010, and since then, he has built upon the church's already outstanding legacy. Pastor Jordan's dedication and passion fill the community with joy, spreading a message of faith, integrity and community action.

In words and deeds, Pastor Jordan encourages his congregation to give back and enrich the community. Throughout his four years in Waukegan, Pastor Jordan has become a central figure in the community and an important voice of hope.

A spirited and inquisitive soul, Pastor Jordan consistently stresses the importance of never settling, of constantly seeking spiritual and personal growth. Anything is possible with the right attitude, and Pastor Jordan demonstrates to all the power of this message.

Pastor Jordan's example reaches far beyond his stirring sermons and moving songs. A husband, father, community leader and musician, he sets a daily example for his congregation and community.

In my visits to GFC, I have been moved by Pastor Jordan's passion, care and joy. His vision and discipline to follow that vision are rare and remarkably valuable to his congregation and community.

Pastor Jordan's commitment to his congregation and to Waukegan inspires everyone around him. Our communities are stronger with passionate, dedicated and visionary leaders like Pastor Jordan. I congratulate him on four years with GFC and thank him for his outstanding work.

HONORING 2013 ''MR. AMIGO'' MARIANA SEOANE GARCÍA

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Charro Days Fiesta and commend the 2013 ''Mr. Amigo,'' recently chosen by the Mr. Amigo Association of Brownsville, TX, and Matamoros, Tamaulipas, in Mexico.

Mariana Seoane García has been selected as the 2013 ''Mr. Amigo.'' A multi-talented Mexican actress, model, and singer, her style and charisma have won the hearts and minds of audiences across the world. In addition to her work as a performer, Ms. Seoane García has given back to her community, for example by participating in Univision's Teletón USA (USA Telethon) to raise money for children's healthcare. She is a wonderful choice to represent the spirit of friendship.

Beginning in 1964, the ''Mr. Amigo'' award is an annual tribute to an outstanding Mexican citizen who has made a lasting contribution during the previous year to international solidarity and goodwill. ''Mr. Amigo'' acts as an ambassador between the United States and Mexico and presides over the annual Charro Days Fiesta.

Charro Days dates back to 1937, when the citizens of Brownsville organized the event in the midst of the Great Depression to celebrate the cultural heritage shared between Brownsville and its sister city, Matamoros, Tamaulipas, across the border in Mexico. The first Charro Days celebration featured a parade with horse-drawn floats and participants dressed in traditional Mexican costumes reminiscent of charros, or Mexican cowboys.

From these humble beginnings, Charro Days has evolved into a multi-day event which includes dances, fiestas, a children's parade, and the Grand International Parade drawing an estimated 50,000 participants annually from Texas and Mexico.

The 77th annual Charro Days celebration commenced on February 23rd, with a grito, or celebratory yell. Later this week, the Mayor of Brownsville and the Mayor of Matamoros will meet at the Gateway International Bridge and extend their hands across the border to symbolize the friendship between the two cities.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to honor the Charro Days Fiesta and for joining me in recognizing the importance of this annual celebration which continues to strengthen the relationship between Brownsville and Matamoros, as well as the United States and Mexico.

THE WORLDWIDE PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, I chaired a subcommittee hearing on the persecution of Christians worldwide, a topic which has been neglected by our media and world leaders—including those in the United States.

The focus on anti-Christian persecution was not meant to minimize the suffering of other religious minorities who are imprisoned or killed for their beliefs: as the poet John Donne wrote, ''Any man's death doth diminish me.''

We stand for human dignity and respect for life from the womb to the tomb, and the subcommittee has and will continue to highlight the suffering of religious minorities around the globe, be they Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, Ba'hai in Iran, Buddhists in occupied Tibet, Yazidis in Iraq or the Muslim Rohingya people in Burma.

Christians, however, remain the most persecuted religious group the world over, and thus deserve the special attention that the hearing gave them. As one of the hearing witnesses, the distinguished journalist John Allen has written: ''Christians today indisputably are the most persecuted religious body on the planet, and too often their martyrs suffer in silence.''

Researchers from the Pew Center have documented incidents of harassment of religious groups worldwide—a term defined as including ''physical assaults; arrests and detentions; desecration of holy sites; and discrimination against religious groups in employment, education and housing''—and has concluded that Christians are the single most harassed group today. In the year 2012, Pew reports, Christians were harassed in 110 countries around the world.

This is particularly true in the Middle East where, as one of those heard from, Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, has said, ''flagrant and widespread persecution of Christians rages. . . even as we meet.''

Archbishop Chullikatt was the papal nuncio to Iraq, where we have seen repeated violent assaults on Christians, such as the October 31, 2010 assault upon Our Lady of Deliverance Syrian Catholic Cathedral in Baghdad in which 58 people were killed and another 70 wounded. Attacks such as this have led the Christian population of Iraq—whose roots date back to the time of the Apostles—to dwindle from 1.4 million in 1987 prior to the first Gulf War, to as little as 150,000 today, according to some estimates. Much of this exodus has occurred during a time in which our country invested heavily in blood and treasure in seeking to help Iraqis build a democracy. As we witness the black flag of al-Qaeda again fly over cities such as Fallujah, which we had won at the cost of so much American blood, we wonder how it is that for Christians in Iraq, life appears to be worse now than it was under the vicious dictator Saddam Hussein.

If we turn to Egypt, we see a Christian population which dates back to the Apostle St. Mark also being oppressed. At a hearing we had last December 10—Human Rights Day—we heard how churches have been subjected to mob attacks and burned. For example, in April of 2012, St. Mark's Cathedral, seat of the Coptic Pope, was attacked by 30–40 Muslim youths. While dozens of Copts were sheltering inside, security forces joined the mob. Rather than dispersing the crowd, they participated in the all-night attack or stood idly by as rocks, gasoline bombs, and gas canisters were lobbed into the iconic cathedral.

Likewise, last year the subcommittee held a hearing on persecution of religious minorities in Syria. Syria had been a place of relative tolerance for religious minorities in the Middle East, including groups like the Mandeans, who trace their roots to the time of John the Baptist and whom they still revere.

It is this connection with the past which has helped bring radical Islamists to Syria, where not only do they seek to overthrow a violent dictator—Bashar al-Assad, but also seek to eradicate Christianity from the land.

Last September, members of al-Nusra, an al-Qaeda linked group, attacked the town of Malula. Why this is significant is because Malula is a living link with the time of Christ, a Christian village in Syria where Aramaic, the language of Jesus, is still spoken. It is for this reason that Malula was targeted—in the words of one of those attacking this small village whose way of life had remained largely unchanged over the centuries, the Mujahadeen are seeking to ''conquer the capital of the Crusaders.'' Such is the perspective of one whose vision has been distorted by hatred.

But it is not just in the Middle East where we see the persecution of Christians.

I would like to recall one story of one man I met, first in Jos, Nigeria, and then in Washington when we held a hearing on the terror group, Boko Haram last October. It was in the face of this one man that I was able to witness the face of the persecuted Church, which indeed is also the face of Christ.

Habila Adamu is a businessman from Yobe State in northern Nigeria. On the night of November 28, 2012, masked gunmen armed with AK–47 entered his home. They told his wife to leave, as they were here to ''do the work of Allah.''

The questioning began.

''Are you a policeman?''

''No.''

''Are you a Nigerian soldier?''

''No.''

''Are you a Christian?''

''Yes.''

They then asked him why he has not accepted Islam, when he has heard the message of Muhammad.

He replied that ''I am a Christian. We are also preaching the gospel of the true God to you and to other people who do not yet know God.''

They then asked, ''Habila, Are you ready to die as a Christian?''

''I am ready to die as a Christian.''

They asked him again, ''Are you ready to die as a Christian?''

He replied, ''I am ready. . .'' And before he had closed his mouth, a bullet ripped through him.

You can see the exit point of the wound in the photo before you. . .

How many of us, who profess Christ, would have been able to stare martyrdom in the face and refuse to renounce Christ?

Habila Adamu, by the grace of God, survived. The term ''hero'' is one thrown around loosely these days, but he is a hero of his faith.

And there are many more like him. We heard stories from around the world, where Christians are under attack simply for the beliefs they profess. We heard witnesses discuss persecution in places such as Burma, Vietnam, Eritrea, even in this hemisphere.

According to some estimates, China is on track to become the largest Christian nation in the world, though numbers are hard to pin down, because most of these Christians remain underground and cannot worship freely.

As US Commission on International Freedom Commissioner Elliott Abrams points out, independent Protestants and Catholics continue to face persecution for refusing to affiliate with government-approved religious groups. Protestant ''house church'' groups that refuse to join the state-approved Protestant religious organization are deemed illegal and experience harassment, fines, detentions, and imprisonment. Approximately 900 Protestants were detained in the past year for conducting public worship activities. Seven Protestant leaders also were imprisoned for terms exceeding one year. The Chinese Government issued a directive to ''eradicate'' unregistered Protestant churches over the next ten years, including through force. Police have embraced the plan, raiding meetings, seeking to break up large churches that previously operated openly, and detaining religious leaders.

The Chinese Government continues to appoint Bishops without Vatican approval and place them in leadership positions, setting back Vatican-Beijing relations. Dozens of Catholic clergy, including three Bishops, remain in detention, in home confinement, under surveillance, or disappeared. Bishop Thaddeus Ma Daqin, the Auxiliary Bishop of Shanghai, has been missing since he publicly announced his resignation from the state-approved Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association in June 2012. Bishop James Su Zhimin, arrested in 1996 while participating in a religious procession and convicted of QUOTE ''unregistered religious activity''—in other words for remaining loyal to the Catholic Church, and not the State-authorized Church. Bishop Su has not been heard of since his arrest, and the Chinese government has repeatedly rebuffed inquiries as to his condition.

In Vietnam, to name one of these countries, churches are forced to register, and worship outside of State-authorized churches is forbidden. Christian ethnic minorities, such as the Hmong and Montagnard, are allowed to exist in uneasy tension with the governing authorities, knowing that the heavy hand of the state could stop their worship at any time. Vietnam's Catholics, both clergy and laity, fill Vietnam's jails as prisoners of conscience, for calling the government to account to a higher law than that of arbitrary dictates. The attack on a Catholic funeral procession in the village of Con Dau in 2010 resulted in more than 100 villagers injured, 62 arrested, five tortured, and at least three deaths; this should remind one of the brutality that Christians in Vietnam face.

And I mention Vietnam because now, in secrecy, negotiations are being held over the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Vietnam seeks entry, and if we focus on the utility and profits of increased trade without holding Vietnam to account for its human rights record, we miss an opportunity to better the lives of those who are beaten, imprisoned and even killed for their faith.

HONORING BROWNSVILLE LEADERS BOB AND RACHEL TORRES

HON. FILEMON VELA

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. VELA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and commend two outstanding individuals who have dedicated more than 50 years to the communities of Brownsville, Texas and

Matamoros, Tamaulipas, in Mexico through their work with the Mr. Amigo Association.

Since the founding of the Mr. Amigo Association in 1963, Bob and Rachel Torres have both pledged time and effort to strengthen the relationship and promote the rich culture between these bordering cities.

Mr. Torres began his work in Mr. Amigo Association in 1964 as a member of the Board of Directors and went on to serve as the vice-president, and president of the entire organization in addition to chairing the Mr. Amigo Selection Committee. He stayed involved, serving as a master of ceremonies, consultant, and liaison between the association and its activities in Mexico for the last 40 years. Apart from his work with Mr. Amigo, Mr. Torres has been a chairman and member of the International Committee of the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce for over 20 years and helped establish the Junior Chamber of Commerce chapters in Mexico in Matamoros and Valle Hermoso.

Mrs. Torres, in addition to her accomplishments through the Mr. Amigo Association, created the event that now kicks off every Charro Days celebration since 1987. This event known as "Hands Across the Border," includes the exchange of national flags by schoolchildren from both Brownsville and Matamoros and the international greetings by their respective mayors. Her involvement in the community goes beyond the Mr. Amigo Association, as she played crucial roles in the establishment of magnet schools in Brownsville, the Gladys Porter Zoo, Brownsville Crime Stoppers, and the Palo Alto Visitors Center. She is also a supporter of the arts and an advocate for healthcare access, and her faith continues to drive her work for her community and its people.

As a couple, Bob and Rachel Torres have worked with the American Consul in Matamoros and the Mexican Consul in Brownsville. Additionally, their work translating countless contracts for labor unions, articles of incorporation, and official meeting minutes has been essential to the success of maquiladoras in Brownsville and Matamoros. All of their accomplishments mentioned here today do not come close to fully describing their unwavering commitment to the welfare of these two vibrant communities.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to honor these outstanding citizens who have not only fostered a strong relationship between Brownsville and Matamoros, but between the United States and Mexico as well.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF THOMAS JEFFERSON JOHNSON AND HONORING THE SERVICE OF MR. KEVIN JOHNSON

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of CPL. Thomas Jefferson Johnson and also honor the service of his son, Kevin Johnson. In 1944, Cpl. Johnson was killed in action during the invasion of Guam. Two years after his passing, Cpl. Johnson was buried by his loved ones, but it was without all the honors he deserved. On January 20, 2014, Kevin Johnson along with the Am Vets in Tulare, California gave Cpl. Johnson the funeral ceremony he rightly deserves. Cpl. Johnson was a source of pride for our Nation, and his service to our country must be honored.

Kevin Johnson was born in Oklahoma, but when the family farm was wiped out in a flood, the entire Johnson family moved to Chowchilla, California, where his father bought a small farm. The last time Mr. Johnson saw his father was in Oklahoma while they were visiting family before he left to the Pacific Theater. Without a father, Mr. Johnson was raised by his mother and grandparents.

After graduating from Tulare Union High, Mr. Johnson joined the military as his father did decades before. He was assigned to an Army Special Forces unit sent into the Vietnam jungle.

Mr. Johnson is a proud member of Am Vets in Tulare. They have been performing the military ceremony at veterans' funerals since 1963. The volunteer honor guard includes 13 men, and they perform 120 graveside services a year. Mr. Johnson and the men he serves with have the privilege to honor hundreds of brave men and women who fought for our country.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the life of CPL. Thomas Jefferson Johnson as he is remembered and honored during the funeral ceremony that is long overdue. We also must recognize the bravery and service of his son, Mr. Kevin Johnson.

IN RECOGNITION OF DAVID LACHMANN AND HIS CAREER IN SERVICE

HON. BOB GOODLATTE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I, along with House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member JOHN CONYERS, Jr., would like to take this opportunity to thank David Lachmann for his service to Congress and congratulate him on his retirement. David has worked in the House of Representatives for the past twenty-five years, many of those with the House Committee on the Judiciary.

David began serving as Legislative Director for Congressman NADLER's office in January 1993. He joined the staff of the House Committee on the Judiciary in 1998 as minority staff for the Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law. In 2001, David moved with Representative NADLER to the Constitution Subcommittee and became its Chief of Staff in 2006.

David has spent nearly thirty years in public service. Prior to joining Representative NADLER when he became a Congressman in 1993, David served as Legislative Assistant to Representative Stephen J. Solarz from 1989–1992. From 1985 to 1989, David was the Chief of Staff to Eileen C. Dugan, a member of the New York State Assembly, representing part of Brooklyn. A native of New York City, David is a graduate of Boston University and holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Political Science.

David's ability to work well with his colleagues, especially across the aisle and across the Capitol, made him a valuable staff asset to passing many key pieces of legislation. He had the lead staff responsibility in the House for several significant bills that were enacted into law including the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (Public Law 103–141), the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (Public Law 106–274). He was the lead Democratic staffer during the debate over the Bankruptcy Abuse and Consumer Protection Act of 2005, and has been a key resource to Members, various Administrations, and colleagues on and off the Hill during the Subcommittee's consideration of critical constitutional, civil rights, and civil liberties issues.

We are deeply appreciative of the service and contributions that David has provided the Judiciary Committee and the Congress for the past twenty-five years. Over this time, many people on and off Capitol Hill have been fortunate to call him a colleague and friend. He will be missed. We wish him the best of fortunes and fulfillment in his future endeavors.

HONORING THE SERVICE ACADEMY NOMINEES OF THE 4TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

HON. SCOTT PERRY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor thirty-three exceptional young men and women from the 4th Congressional District of Pennsylvania who have been nominated to attend a United States Service Academy. I submit with great pride the following nominations:

Nominated to the United States Military Academy—Matthew Benjamin, Jacob Jenkins, Chance King, Sabrina Mortell, Josh Mueller, Graeme Nelson, Zachary Schaeffer, and Tom Snell;

Nominated to the United States Naval Academy—Reed Alioth, Dom Antonelli, Bonaire Berry, Tyler Dolmetsch, Joe Fletcher, Matthew Gregoire, Liam Handley, Jacob Jenkins, Ian Johnson, Noah Krechel, Madi Luckenbaugh, Evan Miller, Logan Morris, Josh Mueller, Hayley Murdouh, Seth Murphy-Sweet, Graeme Nelson, Briannah Rohrbaugh, Sarah Sheerin, and Billy Stolkovich;

Nominated to the United States Air Force Academy—Hank Anderson, Donny Crabill, Matt Dieffenbach, Steven Foster, Noah Krechel, Marlaina McConville, Darren Miller, Evan Miller, and Natalie Seitz; and

Nominated to the United States Merchant Marine Academy—Jon Tarbox.

These individuals have distinguished themselves among their peers as leaders who are committed to serving their country in uniform. As these highly motivated and talented young men and women progress through the academy selection process, let us remember and be grateful for the sacrifice they are preparing to make in the name of our country and our citizens. I commend each, and wish them Godspeed in their future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING THE CAREER OF RITA BORNSTEIN, PH.D.

HON. ALAN GRAYSON

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GRAYSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Women's History Month, to recognize the accomplishments of Dr. Rita Bornstein. Dr. Bornstein served as the 13th president of Rollins College from 1990 to 2004. In 2001, she was named the George D. and Harriet W. Cornell Chair of Distinguished Presidential Leadership when Rollins received $10 million for the first endowment of a college presidency in the nation. At the conclusion of her 14-year presidency, she was appointed the George D. and Harriet W. Cornell Chair of Philanthropy and Leadership Development at Rollins.

A recognized leader in higher education, Dr. Bornstein serves as a speaker and consultant on issues of leadership, governance, and fundraising in the nonprofit sector. She is also the author of over 40 articles, 14 book chapters, and five books, including Legitimacy in the Academic Presidency: From Entrance to Exit, published in November 2003 by ACE/Praeger. She has been featured or quoted in over 200 publications, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Boston Globe, The Wall Street Journal, and The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Under Dr. Bornstein's leadership, Rollins conducted the largest fundraising campaign in its history, raising $160.2 million on a $100 million goal. Before coming to Rollins, she was vice president for development at the University of Miami, where she led what was then one of the largest and most successful campaigns in the history of American higher education.

She has received numerous awards including the John Young History Maker Award, E. Burr Gibson Lifetime Achievement Award from CASE, Orlando Magazine's ''50 Most Powerful People,'' Central Florida Woman of the Year, Junior Achievement Hall of Fame Laureate, Laureate for Lifetime Achievement in Fundraising from the Institute for Charitable Giving, the Henry A. Rosso Award for Lifetime Achievement in Ethical Fund Raising from The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, Citizen of the Decade from the Winter Park Chamber of Commerce, and three honorary doctorates.

Dr. Bornstein has served on numerous commissions, committees, non-profit and corporate boards including: Tupperware Corporation, Barnett Bank, NationsBank, Council for Advancement and Support of Education (Chair), American Council on Education, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. Currently, she is active on the boards of the the Association of Governing Boards, Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts, and the Winter Park Health Foundation.

Dr. Bornstein earned her B.A. and M.A. degrees in English literature from Florida Atlantic University and was awarded a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from the University of Miami.

I am happy to honor Dr. Rita Bornstein, during Women's History Month, for her accomplishments and commitment to education and public service.

RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF LISA LOPEZ

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Women's History Month, to recognize Lisa Lopez, a leader and advocate for workers' rights. Lisa was born in The Bronx, New York. She was raised by a very caring single mother of five, including Lisa's twin sister Elizabeth. She attended Grace Vocational High School and worked in retail stores while living in New York City.

In 1990, Lisa moved to Florida in an attempt to improve her quality of life. She worked tirelessly in the fast food and supermarket industries; working two jobs a day for many years. Lisa has a strong work ethic and is often recognized as a team leader. She believes in equality and fair pay for all.

As such, she joined Our Walmart, an organization that envisions a future in which Walmart treats its Associates with respect and dignity. After two years of employment at a Central Florida Walmart, Lisa took the courageous step of going on strike after Walmart retaliated against her for speaking out about working conditions.

I met Lisa when I visited the Walmart where she worked on Black Friday 2012. I delivered bagged lunches to employees along with flyers on their right to organize. Lisa was exceptionally brave and committed to her rights as an employee. She was the only employee to walk out on strike with me that night.

Lisa has become a spokesperson for Our Walmart, traveling throughout the country and meeting with workers and government officials. In her spare time, she volunteers at her church and spends time with her three sons, Giovanni, Christopher, and Justin. She is also a grandmother to Giovanni Jr.

I am happy to honor Lisa Lopez, during Women's History Month, for her dedication to workers' rights.

RECOGNIZING THE LEADERSHIP OF DEIRDRE MACNAB

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Women's History Month, to recognize Deirdre Macnab, a leader in the Central Florida community. Macnab is in her third term as President of the League of Women Voters of Florida. During her presidency, the Florida League played a leadership role in the passage of Amendments 5 and 6 to the Florida Constitution. The Amendments lent a decisive blow to decades of partisan gerrymandering that plagued Florida's redistricting process. In addition, the League is a leading organization in voter education.

Macnab's background includes an M.B.A. from Columbia University in marketing and finance, and a B.A. from New York University in history and political science. She has worked for Dun & Bradstreet Corporation, Manville Corporation and Bankers Trust, and was president of her own direct marketing consulting firm in Nashville, TN.

Macnab has served on several boards including the Board of Correction, a watchdog agency working in New York City prisons. She was also elected to the Board of Education in Nashville, TN and appointed by Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta to serve as her designate on the Fulton County Library Board. In addition, Macnab is a former member of the Board of MyRegion.org, a seven-county visioning coalition in Central Florida and a former member of WMFE's Citizens Advisory Board.

Macnab has received La Prensa newspaper's Mujeres Destacadas Award for being a ''Community Champion,'' the Florida Commission on the Status of Women Florida Achievement Award for 2012, and been named the Orlando Sentinel Most Influential Central Floridian of the Year for 2012. Senator Bill Nelson and Senator Marco Rubio appointed Macnab to sit on the Federal Judicial Nominating Commission for the state of Florida. The Commission submits candidates for Federal judgeships to the President.

I am happy to honor Deirdre Macnab, during Women's History Month, for her leadership and dedication to civic engagement and service.

RECOGNIZING THE LEADERSHIP AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF FORMER CONGRESSWOMAN PATRICIA ''PAT'' SCHROEDER)

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Women's History Month, to recognize the outstanding contributions of former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, who now lives in Central Florida. Born in Portland, Oregon in 1940, Patricia ''Pat'' Schroeder graduated magna cum laude in 1961 from the University of Minnesota while working as an insurance claims adjuster to support herself through college. Mrs. Schroeder went on to Harvard Law School, where she was one of only 15 women in a class of more than 500 men. She earned her J.D. in 1964 and moved to Denver, Colorado with her husband, James.

In 1972, Schroeder won election for Congress in Colorado's first district, based in Denver, over freshman Republican incumbent James McKevitt. At age 31, Schroeder was the second-youngest woman ever elected to the United States Congress. A mother of two young children at the time of her election to the House, Mrs. Schroeder went on to serve 12 terms.

While in Congress, she became the first woman to serve on the House Armed Services Committee. She was also a member of the original U.S. House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, established in 1983.

Schroeder, who was known in her early tenure for balancing her congressional work with motherhood, even bringing diapers to the floor of Congress, also became known for her advocacy on work-family issues. She was the main force behind the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 and the 1985 Military Family Act.

Schroeder was also involved in the reform of Congress itself, working to weaken the longstanding control of committees by their chairs, sparring with Speaker Carl Albert over congressional ''hideaways,'' and questioning why Members who lived in their offices should not be taxed for the benefit. Mrs. Schroeder left Congress undefeated in 1996 after representing Colorado's First Congressional District in the House of Representatives for 24 years.

Following her retirement from Congress, Schroeder was a Professor at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Currently, she is very active in all aspects of the Central Florida community. In addition to heading the Association of American Publishers (AAP), she also serves on the Marguerite Casey Foundation Board of Directors, the American Bar Association's Center for Human Rights Executive Committee, and is the Chair of the Council for a Livable World's PeacePAC.

Mrs. Schroeder is the author of two books: ''Champion of the Great American Family'' and

"24 Years of House Work . . . and the Place Is Still a Mess." She lives with her husband, James in Celebration, Florida.

I am honored to recognize former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, during Women's History Month, for her many contributions.

HONORING THE LIFE OF JOE LEVY

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Joe Levy who passed away on February 10, 2014, at the age of 82. Joe was a pillar in the community, and his support, dedication, and commitment to the success of the City of Fresno will be greatly missed.

Joe was born and raised in Fresno, California. After graduating from Fresno High School, he attended the University of Southern California. He then went on to work in Des Moines, Iowa, for Younker's department store. In 1956, Joe's journey with Gottschalks began. When he joined the company in 1956, Gottschalks had one store in Downtown Fresno. Under Joe's leadership as CEO and Chairman, the company grew to 80 stores.

Joe was a savvy businessman, but his success was attributed to more than just knowing how to run a business. His understanding and compassion for others were significant traits that contributed to Joe's accomplishments. He truly cared for his employees, and during a time when it was a contentious issue, Joe was a strong advocate for women's advancement in the workplace.

Joe helped shape the Valley's business community, but his influence spread to all sectors of the region. His advocacy led to building California's Highway 41, and he was a tireless supporter of Measure C, which helped pay for segments of Highways 41, 168, and 180. Joe was also devoted to the revitalization of Downtown Fresno. He was an active member in the Downtown Association, and he understood the importance of a prospering downtown hub in order to have a thriving economy in the City of Fresno. In addition, Joe served as President of the Fresno Chamber of Commerce.

In 1954, Joe married the love of his life, Sharon. They would have been married 60 years this week. Joe and Sharon shared a love for their community. They raised three children: Felicia, Jody, and Bret. Joe's children, nine grandchildren, relatives, and friends will always have a special place in their heart for Joe. Every day he demonstrated the importance of treating others with kindness and respect.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect that I ask my colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives to honor the life of Joe Levy. His presence will be greatly missed, but his legacy will surely live on in the City of Fresno.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE KHOJALY TRAGEDY

HON. GENE GREEN

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues the tragedy that took place in Khojaly, Azerbaijan 22 years ago today, February 25, 1992. That evening, scores of lives of innocent Azerbaijanis living in Khojaly were lost and many others were wounded or taken hostage when their city was brutally attacked.

With a population of 7,000, Khojaly was one of the three largest urban settlements of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Nagarno-Karabakh is recognized by the United States and the United Nations as Azerbaijani territory occupied by Armenia.

At the time, the Khojaly tragedy was widely covered by the international media, including the Boston Globe, Washington Post, New York Times, Financial Times, and many other European and Russian news agencies.

Over two decades later, there is still too little attention or interest paid to the plight of Khojaly outside of Azerbaijan.

According to Human Rights Watch and other international observers the massacre was committed by Armenian troops, reportedly with the help of the former Soviet 366th Motor Rifle Regiment. Human Rights Watch described the Khojaly Massacre as "the largest massacre to date in the conflict" over Nagorno-Karabakh. In a 1993 report, they stated "there are no exact figures for the number of Azeri civilians killed because Karabakh Armenian forces gained control of the area after the massacre" and "while it is widely accepted that 200 Azeris were murdered, as many as 500–1,000 may have died."

Soon after the attack, Time Magazine published the following report on the Khojaly Massacre: "While the details are disputed, this much is plain: something grim and unconscionable happened in the Azerbaijani town of Khojaly two weeks ago. So far, some 200 dead Azerbaijanis, many of them mutilated, have been transported out of the town tucked inside the Armenian-dominated enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh for burial in neighboring Azerbaijan. The total number of dead—the Azerbaijanis claim 1,324 civilians were slaughtered, most of them women and children—is unknown."

Azerbaijan has been a strong strategic partner and friend of the United States. The tragedy of Khojaly was a crime against humanity and I urge my colleagues to join me in standing with the people of Azerbaijan as they commemorate this tragedy and urge world leaders to help bring a peaceful solution to the occupation of these lands.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN A. WESTMORELAND

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 62.

I had to depart DC early in order to arrive in GA in time to attend prior obligations there that would have been missed had I stayed in DC, due to the quickly deteriorating weather conditions in Washington and Georgia that eventually forced the closure of all the local airports in DC and Atlanta.

Had I been present, I would have voted "yea."

HONORING THE LIFE OF HUBERT WALSH

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Mr. Hubert Walsh, known to many as "Hub," who passed away on February 10, 2014, at the age of 89. Hub's service to our nation and his contributions to the community of Merced are countless and deeply appreciated.

Born January 16, 1925, in Blue Ridge, Texas, Hub was the youngest of eight children. Hub worked hard to help make ends meet for his single mother and his siblings by working on farms and picking cotton. In 1943, he graduated from Anna High School and enlisted in the United States Army, where he served his country in World War II. After three years of service in France, the Ardennes, the Rhineland and Central Europe, Mr. Walsh was honorably discharged in January 1946. Not long after his discharge, Hub enlisted in the United States Air Force where he served in historic operations, including the Berlin Air Lift, the Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the Vietnam War.

In 1946, Hub met his future wife, Mary Elizabeth Worthen, while stationed in Rockwell, New Mexico. They met over the Thanksgiving holiday while traveling on the same bus to visit their respective families, and soon they began dating. One day after Christmas in 1947, they married and spent the next 63 years together. Hub and Mary had three children together and lived in 20 homes in six states, finally settling in the Central Valley.

After retiring from the U.S. Air Force in 1969, Mr. Walsh attended Merced College and Stanislaus State University. Hub was a dedicated servant of the local community of Merced, where he worked as a substitute teacher for Merced City Schools and Merced High School. In addition, he was a devout Christian and served as a deacon in the Southern Baptist Church.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Mr. Hubert Walsh. He was a pillar of our community who will be greatly missed.

CORRECTION

Daily Digest

Senate

Chamber Action

Routine Proceedings, pages S1011–S1132

Measures Introduced: Four bills and one resolution were introduced, as follows: S. 2038–2041, and S. Con. Res. 32. **Page S1048**

Measures Reported:

S. 1086, to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute. (S. Rept. No. 113–138) **Page S1048**

Measures Passed:

National Integrated Drought Information System Reauthorization Act: Senate passed H.R. 2431, to reauthorize the National Integrated Drought Information System. **Page S1132**

Measures Considered:

Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act—Agreement: Senate continued consideration of the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 1982, to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans. **Pages S1011–13, S1020–39**

During consideration of this measure today, Senate also took the following action:

By a unanimous vote of 99 yeas (Vote No. 44), three-fifths of those Senators duly chosen and sworn, having voted in the affirmative, Senate agreed to the motion to close further debate on the motion to proceed to consideration of the bill. **Page S1027**

A unanimous-consent agreement was reached providing for further consideration of the motion to proceed to consideration of the bill, post-cloture, at approximately 11:30 a.m., on Wednesday, February 26, 2014; and that all time during adjournment and morning business, count post-cloture on the motion to proceed to consideration of the bill. **Page S1132**

Message from the President: Senate received the following message from the President of the United States:

Transmitting, pursuant to law, a report on the continuation of the national emergency with respect to Cuba and of the emergency authority relating to the regulation of the anchorage and movement of vessels; which was referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs. (PM–30) **Page S1046**

Nominations Confirmed: Senate confirmed the following nominations:

By 95 yeas to 4 nays (Vote No. EX. 39), James Maxwell Moody, Jr., of Arkansas, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas. **Pages S1016–18, S1132**

By 90 yeas to 5 nays (Vote No. EX. 41), James Donato, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California. **Pages S1019, S1132**

During consideration of this nomination today, Senate also took the following action:

By 55 yeas to 42 nays, 1 responding present (Vote No. 40), Senate agreed to the motion to close further debate on the nomination. **Pages S1018–19**

By 91 yeas to 7 nays (Vote No. EX. 43), Beth Labson Freeman, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California. **Pages S1020, S1132**

During consideration of this nomination today, Senate also took the following action:

By 56 yeas to 42 nays, 1 responding present (Vote No. 42), Senate agreed to the motion to close further debate on the nomination. **Pages S1019–20**

Executive Communications: **Pages S1046–48**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages S1048–49**

Statements on Introduced Bills/Resolutions: **Pages S1049–50**

Additional Statements: **Pages S1044–46**

Amendments Submitted: **Pages S1050–S1132**

Authorities for Committees to Meet: **Pages S1132**

Record Votes: Six record votes were taken today. (Total—44) **Pages S1017–20, S1027**

Adjournment: Senate convened at 10 a.m. and adjourned at 6:34 p.m., until 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, February 26, 2014. (For Senate's program, see the remarks of the Acting Majority Leader in today's Record on page S1132.)

Committee Meetings

(Committees not listed did not meet)

NOMINATIONS

Committee on Armed Services: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Christine E. Wormuth, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Policy, Brian P. McKeon, of New York, to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Policy, David B. Shear, of New York, to be Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, Eric Rosenbach, of Pennsylvania, to be Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense, Robert O. Work, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary, who was introduced by Senator Warner, and Michael J. McCord, of Ohio, to be Under Secretary (Comptroller), who was introduced by former Senator Sam Nunn, all of the Department of Defense, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

TERRORISM RISK INSURANCE MARKET

Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs: Committee concluded a hearing to examine reauthorizing the Terrorism Risk Insurance Market (TRIA), focusing on the state of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Market, after receiving testimony from W. Edward Walter, Host Hotels and Resorts, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland, on behalf of the Coalition to Insure Against Terrorism; Carolyn Snow, Risk and Insurance Management Society, Inc., Louisville, Kentucky; Bill Henry, McQueary, Henry, Bowles and Troy, Inc., Dallas, Texas, on behalf of The Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers; Vincent T. Donnelly, PMA Insurance Group, Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, on behalf of the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America; Warren W. Heck, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies, New York, New York; and Douglas Elliot, The Hartford Financial Services Group, Rocky Hill, Connecticut, on behalf of the American Insurance Association.

ECONOMIC AND BUDGET OUTLOOK

Committee on the Budget: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the economic and budget outlook for individuals, families, and communities, after receiving testimony from Neera Tanden, Center for American Progress, and Robert Doar, American Enterprise Institute, both of Washington, D.C.; Edith Kimball, Lee Elementary School, Lee, Florida; Courtney Johnson, Fort Hayes Arts and Academic High School, Columbus, Ohio; and Scott Winship, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, New York, New York.

NATURAL RESOURCE ADAPTATION

Committee on Environment and Public Works: Subcommittee on Oversight concluded a hearing to examine natural resource adaptation, focusing on protecting ecosystems and economies, after receiving testimony from John P. Holdren, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President; Dan Ashe, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior; Noah Matson, Defenders of Wildlife, Washington, D.C.; David Houghton, National Wildlife Refuge Association, Harrisville, New Hampshire; Christopher Brown, Rhode Island Commercial Fishermen's Association, West Kingston; Patrick Moore, Ecosense Environmental, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Robert Bryce, Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, Austin, Texas.

LEBANON

Committee on Foreign Relations: Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs concluded a hearing to examine Lebanon at the crossroads, after receiving testimony from Lawrence Silverman, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs; Major General Michael Plehn, Principal Director, Middle East Policy, Department of Defense; and Paul Salem, Middle East Institute, and Aram Nerguizian, Center for Strategic and International Studies, both of Washington, D.C.

SITUATION IN THE UKRAINE

Committee on Foreign Relations: Committee received a closed briefing on the situation in the Ukraine from Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT OPTIONS AND TRENDS

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Committee concluded a hearing to examine mental health, focusing on treatment options and trends, after receiving testimony from William Cooper, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, Nashville, Tennessee; Benjamin S. Fernandez, Loudoun County Public Schools, Ashburn, Virginia; John Arch, Boys Town National Research Hospital, Omaha, Nebraska; and Tiffany Martinez, Portland, Maine.

NOMINATIONS

Committee on the Judiciary: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of Gregg Jeffrey Costa, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit, who was introduced by Senator Cornyn, Tanya S. Chutkan, to be United States District Judge for the District of Columbia, who was introduced by Representative Norton, M. Hannah Lauck, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Virginia, who was introduced by Senators Warner and Kaine, Leo T. Sorokin, to be

United States District Judge for the District of Massachusetts, who was introduced by Senator Warren, and John Charles Cruden, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice, who was introduced by Senator Udall (NM), after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

REASSESSING SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights concluded a hearing to examine reassessing solitary confinement II, focusing on the human rights, fiscal, and public safety consequences, after receiving testimony from Charles E. Samuels, Jr., Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons, Department of Justice; Rick Raemisch, Colorado Department of Corrections Executive Director, Colorado Springs; Craig DeRoche, Justice Fellowship, Novi, Michigan; Marc A. Levin, Texas Public Policy Foundation, Austin; Piper Kerman, Brooklyn, New York; and Damon A. Thibodeaux, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

NOMINATIONS

Select Committee on Intelligence: Committee concluded a hearing to examine the nominations of John P. Carlin, of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General, Department of Justice, and Francis Xavier Taylor, of Maryland, to be Undersecretary of Homeland Security for Intelligence and Analysis, after the nominees testified and answered questions in their own behalf.

House of Representatives

Chamber Action

Public Bills and Resolutions Introduced: 15 public bills, H.R. 4075–4089; and 6 resolutions, H. Con. Res. 86–88; and H. Res. 488–490 were introduced. **Page H1937**

Additional Cosponsors: **Pages H1938–39**

Reports Filed: Report were filed today as follows:

H.R. 1123, to promote consumer choice and wireless competition by permitting consumers to unlock mobile wireless devices, and for other purposes, with an amendment (H. Rept. 113–356);

H.R. 1944, to protect private property rights (H. Rept. 113–357);

H.R. 3308, to require a Federal agency to include language in certain educational and advertising materials indicating that such materials are produced and disseminated at taxpayer expense, with an amendment (H. Rept. 113–358);

Supplemental report on H.R. 2804, to amend title 5, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to publish information about rules on the Internet, and for other purposes (H. Rept. 113–354, Pt. 2);

H.R. 1232, to amend titles 40, 41, and 44, United States Code, to eliminate duplication and waste in information technology acquisition and management (H. Rept. 113–359);

H.R. 3979, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, with an amendment (H. Rept. 113–360);

H. Res. 487, providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3865) to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from modifying the standard for determining whether an organization is operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare for purposes of section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986; providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2804) to amend title 5, United States Code, to require the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to publish information about rules on the Internet, and for other purposes; and providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules (H. Rept. 113–361). **Pages H1936–37**

Speaker: Read a letter from the Speaker wherein he appointed Representative Harris to act as Speaker pro tempore for today. **Page H1883**

Recess: The House recessed at 12:19 p.m. and reconvened at 2 p.m. **Page H1885**

Recess: The House recessed at 2:13 p.m and reconvened at 3:02 p.m. **Page H1887**

Suspensions: The House agreed to suspend the rules and pass the following measures:

FOIA Oversight and Implementation Act: H.R. 1211, amended, to amend section 552 of title 5, United States Code (commonly known as the Freedom of Information Act), to provide for greater public access to information, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 410 yeas with none voting "nay", Roll No. 63; **Pages H1887–91, H1921–23**

Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act: H.R. 1232, amended, to amend titles 40, 41, and 44, United States Code, to eliminate duplication and waste in information technology acquisition and management; **Pages H1891–H1902**

Taxpayers Right-To-Know Act: H.R. 1423, amended, to provide taxpayers with an annual report disclosing the cost and performance of Government programs and areas of duplication among them; **Pages H1902–04**

Unlocking Consumer Choice and Wireless Competition Act: H.R.1123, amended, to promote consumer choice and wireless competition by permitting consumers to unlock mobile wireless devices, by a ⅔ yea-and-nay vote of 295 yeas to 114 nays, Roll No. 64; **Pages H1904–12, H1922–23**

Taxpayer Transparency and Efficient Audit Act: H.R. 2530, amended, to improve transparency and efficiency with respect to audits and communications between taxpayers and the Internal Revenue Service; and **Pages H1917–19**

Protecting Taxpayers from Intrusive IRS Requests Act: H.R. 2531, to prohibit the Internal Revenue Service from asking taxpayers questions regarding religious, political, or social beliefs. **Pages H1919–21**

Recess: The House recessed at 5:36 p.m. and reconvened at 6:30 p.m. **Page H1921**

Suspension—Proceedings Postponed: The House debated the following measure under suspension of the rules. Further proceedings were postponed:

Private Property Rights Protection Act: H.R. 1944, to protect private property rights. **Pages H1913–17**

Presidential Message: Read a message from the President wherein he notified Congress that the national emergency declared on March 1, 1996, with respect to the Government of Cuba's destruction of two unarmed U.S.-registered civilian aircraft in international airspace north of Cuba on February 24, 1996, as amended and expanded on February 26, 2004, is to continue in effect beyond March 1, 2014—referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed (H. Doc. 113–92). **Pages H1886–87**

Quorum Calls—Votes: Two yea-and-nay votes developed during the proceedings of today and appear on pages H1922, H1922–23. There were no quorum calls.

Adjournment: The House met at 12 noon and adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Committee Meetings

ALL ECONOMIC REGULATIONS ARE TRANSPARENT ACT OF 2013; AND STOP TARGETING OF POLITICAL BELIEFS BY THE IRS ACT OF 2014

Committee on Rules: Full Committee held a hearing on H.R. 2804, the "All Economic Regulations are Transparent Act of 2013"; and H.R. 3865, the "Stop Targeting of Political Beliefs by the IRS Act of 2014". The Committee granted, by record vote of 8–2, a closed rule for H.R. 3865. The rule provides one hour of debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Ways and Means. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule provides that the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Ways and Means now printed in the bill shall be considered as adopted and the bill, as amended, shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. In section 2, the rule provides a structured rule for H.R. 2804. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary. The rule waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule makes in order as original text for the purpose of amendment an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of Rules Committee Print 113–38 and provides that it shall be considered as read. The rule waives all points of order against that amendment in the nature of a substitute. The rule makes in order only those further amendments printed in the Rules Committee report. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question. The rule waives all points of order against the amendments printed in the report. The rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions. In section 3, the rule provides that it shall be in order at any time on the legislative day of February 27, 2014, for the Speaker to entertain motions that the House suspend the rules, as though under clause 1 of rule XV, relating to H.R. 3370, the Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act. Testimony was heard from Chairman Goodlatte; and Representatives Boustany;

Levin; Lujan Grisham; Collins (GA); Cartwright; and Johnson (GA).

Joint Meetings

SWITZERLAND'S LEADERSHIP OF THE OSCE

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe: Commission concluded a hearing to examine Switzerland's leadership of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), focusing on the role of the OSCE in assisting to resolve the crisis in Ukraine, after receiving testimony from Didier Burkhalter, President of the Swiss Confederation, Foreign Minister and Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, Bern, Switzerland.

LEGISLATIVE PRESENTATION

Committee on Veterans' Affairs: Senate committee concluded a joint hearing with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine a legislative presentation of the Disabled American Veterans, after receiving testimony from Joseph W. Johnston, Disabled American Veterans, Cincinnati, Ohio.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2014

(Committee meetings are open unless otherwise indicated)

Senate

Committee on Appropriations: Subcommittee on Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies, to hold hearings to examine the rising cost of Alzheimer's in America, focusing on families and the economy, 2 p.m., SD–106.

Committee on Armed Services: Subcommittee on Personnel, to hold hearings to examine the relationships between military sexual assault, posttraumatic stress disorder and suicide, and on Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs medical treatment and management of victims of sexual trauma, 10 a.m., SR–222.

Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, to hold hearings to examine Department of Defense information technology acquisition processes, business transformation, and management practices in review of the Defense Authorization Request for fiscal year 2015 and the Future Years Defense Program, 2:30 p.m., SR–232A.

Committee on Finance: Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy, to hold hearings to examine retirement savings for low-income workers, 10 a.m., SD–215.

Committee on Foreign Relations: to hold hearings to examine Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and the Swiss Confederation for the Avoidance of Double Taxation with Respect to Taxes on Income, signed at Washington on October 2, 1996, signed on September 23, 2009, at Washington, as corrected by an exchange of notes effected November 16, 2010 and a related agreement effected by an exchange of notes on September 23, 2009 (Treaty Doc. 112–1), Protocol Amending the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed on May 20, 2009, at Luxembourg (the ''proposed Protocol'') and a related agreement effected by the exchange of notes also signed on May 20, 2009 (Treaty Doc. 111–8), Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Hungary for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income, signed on February 4, 2010, at Budapest (the ''proposed Convention'') and a related agreement effected by an exchange of notes on February 4, 2010 (Treaty Doc. 111–7), The Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Chile for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and Capital, signed in Washington on February 4, 2010, with a Protocol signed the same day, as corrected by exchanges of notes effected February 25, 2011, and February 10 and 21, 2012, and a related agreement effected by exchange of notes (the ''related Agreement'') on February 4, 2010 (Treaty Doc. 112–8), and The Protocol Amending the Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, done at Paris on May 27, 2010 (the ''proposed Protocol''), which was signed by the United States on May 27, 2010 (Treaty Doc. 112–5), 10:30 a.m., SD–419.

Full Committee, to hold hearings to examine prospects for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and great lakes region, 2:15 p.m., SD–419.

Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: business meeting consider the nominations of Vivek Hallegere Murthy, of Massachusetts, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, and to be Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, Portia Y. Wu, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, Christopher P. Lu, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Labor, Heather L. MacDougall, of Florida, to be a Member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission, and Massie Ritsch, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary of Education for Communications and Outreach, Time to be announced, Room to be announced.

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs: Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, to hold hearings to examine offshore tax evasion, focusing on the effort to collect unpaid taxes on billions in hidden offshore accounts, 9:30 a.m., SD–G50.

Committee on Indian Affairs: to hold an oversight hearing to examine early childhood development and education in Indian country, focusing on building a foundation for academic success, 2:30 p.m., SD–628.

Committee on the Judiciary: Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights, to hold hearings to examine competition in the wireless market, 10 a.m., SD–226.

House

Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, hearing entitled ''The State of Efforts to Stop Human Trafficking'', 10 a.m., H–309 Capitol.

Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government, hearing on Oversight of Internal Revenue Service, 10 a.m., 2359 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies, hearing on Quality of Life in the Military, 10:30 a.m., 2358–A Rayburn.

Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, hearing on oversight of U.S. Assistance to Promote Freedom and Democracy in Countries with Repressive Environments, 10:30 a.m., H–140, Capitol. This is a closed hearing.

Committee on Armed Services, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''The Posture of the U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Southern Command'', 10 a.m., 2118 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Military Personnel, hearing on Defense Health Agency, 2 p.m., 2212 Rayburn.

Committee on Education and the Workforce, Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions, hearing entitled ''Providing Access to Affordable, Flexible Health Plans through Self-Insurance'', 10 a.m., 2175 Rayburn.

Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Health, hearing entitled ''Messing with Success: How CMS' Attack on the Part D Program Will Increase Costs and Reduce Choices for Seniors'', 10 a.m., 2123 Rayburn.

Committee on Financial Services, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, hearing entitled ''Inspector General Report: Allegations of Improper Lobbying and Obstruction at the Department of Housing and Urban Development'', 10 a.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Capital Markets and Government Sponsored Enterprises, hearing entitled ''The Dodd-Frank Act's Impact on Asset-Backed Securities'', 2 p.m., 2128 Rayburn.

Committee on Foreign Affairs, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''International Wildlife Trafficking Threats to Conservation and National Security'', 10 a.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, hearing entitled ''U.S. Policy Toward Sudan and South Sudan'', 2 p.m., 2172 Rayburn.

Committee on Homeland Security, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''The Secretary's Vision for the Future—Challenges and Priorities'', 10 a.m., 311 Cannon.

Committee on the Judiciary, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Enforcing the President's Constitutional Duty to Faithfully Execute the Laws'', 10 a.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform, Commercial and Antitrust Law, hearing on H.R. 2992, the ''Business Activity Tax Simplification Act of 2013'', 4 p.m., 2141 Rayburn.

Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources, hearing entitled ''American Energy Jobs: Opportunities for Veterans'', 10 a.m., 1324 Longworth.

Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation, hearing on the following legislation: H.R. 503, the ''National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial Act''; H.R. 712, to extend the authorization of the Highlands Conservation Act through fiscal year 2024; H.R. 1192, the ''Mount Jessie Benton Fre'mont''; H.R. 1501, the ''Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument Preservation Act''; H.R. 1744, the ''Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan Implementation Act''; H.R. 2569, the ''Upper Missisquoi and Trout Wild and Scenic Rivers Act''; H.R. 3222, the ''Flushing Remonstrance Study Act''; H.R. 3366, to provide for the release of the property interests retained by the United States in certain land conveyed in 1954 by the United States, acting through the Director of the Bureau of Land Management, to the State of Oregon for the establishment of the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center of Oregon State University in Hermiston, Oregon; H.R. 3802, to extend the legislative authority of the Adams Memorial Foundation to establish a commemorative work in honor of former President John Adams and his legacy, and for other purposes, 10 a.m., 1334 Longworth.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Full Committee, hearing entitled ''Limitless Surveillance at the FDA: Protecting the Rights of Federal Whistleblowers'', 10 a.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Job Creation and Regulatory Affairs, hearing entitled ''Is the Obama Administration Conducting a Serious Investigation of IRS Targeting?'', 1:30 p.m., 2154 Rayburn.

Committee on Rules, Full Committee, hearing on H.R. 899, the ''Unfunded Mandates Information and Transparency Act of 2013'', 3 p.m., H–313 Capitol.

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, hearing entitled ''Oversight of Passenger and Freight Rail Safety'', 2 p.m., 2167 Rayburn.

Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Health, hearing entitled ''VA Accountability: Assessing Actions Taken in Response to Subcommittee Oversight'', 10 a.m., 334 Cannon.

Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Social Security, hearing entitled ''Preventing Disability Scams'', 10 a.m., B–318 Rayburn.

Next Meeting of the SENATE

9:30 a.m., Wednesday, February 26

Senate Chamber

Program for Wednesday: After the transaction of any morning business (not to extend beyond approximately 11:30 a.m.), Senate will continue consideration of the motion to proceed to consideration of S. 1982, Comprehensive Veterans Health and Benefits and Military Retirement Pay Restoration Act.

Next Meeting of the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

10 a.m., Wednesday, February 26

House Chamber

Program for Wednesday: Consideration of H.R. 3865—Stop Targeting of Political Beliefs by the IRS Act of 2014 (Subject to a Rule).

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