

CLAY HUNT SUICIDE PREVENTION
FOR AMERICAN VETERANS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. MICHAEL G. FITZPATRICK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, as our nation continues to welcome home a new generation of veterans from the battlefield, it is vital that we address the challenges faced by these men and women. The effects of combat are not always left behind for our soldiers, and the transition into civilian life all too often is not an easy one.

Right now, our nation is struggling to combat the impact of PTSD on veterans, and statistics from the VA show that each day 22 American veterans take their own life. This epidemic must be dealt with—the lives of those who protected our freedoms are on the line.

This week, the House passed legislation named after Clay Hunt, a Marine veteran who, after working as an activist drawing attention to the struggles of returning veterans, took his life at the age of just 28.

The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act will take meaningful steps to ensure veterans like Clay have the resources and treatment they need when they return home. That means increasing access to, boosting accountability for and removing the stigma of potentially-life saving mental health care.

I stand in support of this legislation with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. I also stand with veterans' advocacy organizations across America—including the Travis Manion Foundation, based in my district—who work daily to engage and empower veterans and their families throughout their individual journeys.

This week, the Travis Manion Foundation will recognize veteran Jake Wood with the group's annual 'If Not Me, The Who Award' for his work to support military veterans upon their return home. This is not the first time the Travis Manion Foundation has recognized Jake—back in 2010, the group gave a fellowship to 'Mission Continues' and 'Team Rubicon', organizations Jake was involved with alongside Clay Hunt. Together, Jake and Clay performed over 500 service hours in humanitarian support with other veterans.

It is fitting that we recognize Jake at this time as we honor Clay with the passing of this bill. The time is now for Senate and president must act on the 'Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act'.

Twenty-two lives lost a day are too many. One is too many. Let's work together—Congress, advocacy groups, and veterans—to put an end to the epidemic of veteran suicide.

INSULAR AREAS AND FREELY ASSOCIATED STATES ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

SPEECH OF

HON. EARL BLUMENAUER

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it's inexcusable that the least productive Congress in

history has waited until the final hour to produce an appropriations package this flawed. The bill fails to take advantage of opportunities to save money, ranging from defense to agricultural reforms, and has instead chosen to make indefensible reductions across critical programs.

In most areas, from health reform to education, the resources committed are insufficient to keep up with inflation let alone tackle the problems that confront America's families.

I have deep concerns regarding a policy rider snuck into the bill that would allow wealthy campaign donors to contribute ten times as much money as the current individual caps allow, further flooding our political system with dark money. Campaign finance provisions are completely non-germane to this bill, and the last thing America needs is to make it easier to spend more money on campaigns.

Instead of making difficult choices about how to fund the Department of Defense, and our sprawling nuclear arsenal, we've chosen an "all of the above" approach, providing the Pentagon with everything it wants, and then some. Managed to at once give it too much for wrong things and refuse to begin reforms the DOD knows it needs and wants to carry out.

The bill commits the U.S. to rebuilding our nuclear triad of ground-based missiles, bombers, and submarines, an effort that could cost over \$1 trillion dollars over the next 30 years and ensure nuclear weapons remain a foundation of U.S. defense planning.

Nothing epitomizes this self-destructive urge than the dramatic cuts to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The \$10.9 billion in funding for the IRS represents a cut of \$350 million from last year. Since fiscal year 2010, Congress has cut IRS funding by almost \$1.2 billion—10 percent—forcing the agency to slash its full-time, permanent workforce by 13,000 employees. This occurred even as the country added approximately 7 million new taxpayers. As a result, the IRS's current staffing level is 26 percent below the number of employees it had 18 years ago.

Among these cuts, the IRS has lost 5,000 enforcement personnel, such as revenue agents and criminal investigators. This leaves billions of dollars in tax revenue uncollected. Every dollar that we invest in the IRS generates \$7 in return. Compliance with our tax code is largely voluntary and these cuts make it much harder for taxpayers to navigate the system. The IRS was already predicting that only 53 percent of taxpayers who call for help would get through to an IRS agent during the 2015 tax season. Even then, the caller would have an average wait of 34 minutes—while the other half would be left to fend for themselves. This is no way to run a government.

I've met with IRS employees reduced to tears by their frustration being unable to help taxpayers in a timely manner. If someone can get through, they then get a taxpayer who is frustrated, probably angry, as well as confused.

The Homeland Security appropriations bill was one of the most bipartisan this year. Holding up full-year funding for this agency, and in turn national security, in an effort to undermine the Administration's executive order on immigration reform is a reckless, maybe even dangerous game.

The bill includes a number of problematic environmental provisions.

Moving away from the scientific consensus, it continues to bar the Department of Energy from enforcing important standards for light bulb efficiency. It prohibits the EPA from regulating lead ammunition. It prohibits the Fish and Wildlife Service from issuing any Endangered Species Act listing rules for sage grouse species. It cuts important farm bill conservation programs. It also maintains ever lower funding for the EPA, while environmental challenges mount. Since 2010, that agency's budget has been cut by more than \$2 billion dollars, or 21 percent.

The bill also includes a very problematic rider that interferes with the direct will of the voters in the District of Columbia. The language is ambiguous, and I share the sentiments of Representatives NORTON and SERRANO that this amendment should not be interpreted as halting the DC measure entirely. Regardless of the interpretation, it is very troubling that Congress interferes with the DC Council's ability to govern to make the city safer and reflect the wishes of its citizens.

America cannot afford to roll the dice on financial reform. This bill rolls back Section 716 of Dodd-Frank, which attempts to deal with the dangerous liability stemming from derivatives trading in taxpayer-insured banks. America cannot afford to risk another taxpayer bailout for Wall Street, while we are still recovering from the last meltdown.

These and many other provisions are deeply concerning and more bad provisions will emerge as people finally have time to read the bill. Nonetheless, in more than 1,000 pages and over a trillion dollars of spending, there are some bright spots.

For more than a decade, I've worked to increase access to clean drinking water and sanitation for the world's poorest populations. The cornerstone of this effort has been through the implementation of my legislation, the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005. This is funded in this bill at its highest level ever. This demonstrates a significant commitment from the U.S. to prioritize this type of development assistance and is an example of what is possible with bipartisan cooperation.

I am pleased the bill makes it clear that Congress believes the Department of Transportation should develop separate performance measures for non-motorized traffic injuries and fatalities. It's past time to put bicyclists and pedestrians on equal footing with motorists when it comes to distributing safety money.

This bill also includes two amendments that I cosponsored and worked closely on to create a more rational drug policy. One amendment, led by Mr. ROHRBACHER, would stop DOJ and DEA from interfering with state medical marijuana laws. This represents a historic shift by the federal government in marijuana policy. This suggests that Congress may finally catch up with how most Americans think and behave.

Another amendment, led by Mr. MASSIE, would ensure that the DEA cannot intervene in legal hemp research by universities and state departments of agriculture. This is the final step in a process that we began almost two years ago, by first passing an amendment to the farm bill allowing the research. This additional language should finally protect those programs.

As the Co-Chair of the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus, I am pleased to see a