

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Mr. Speaker, my vote was not recorded on rollcall No. 224 on H.R. 2048—USA Freedom Act of 2015. I was present for the vote but not recorded due to a mechanical problem with my voting card. I intended to vote “aye.”

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mrs. CAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I was not able to be present for the following rollcall votes on May 13, 2015 and would like the record to reflect that I would have voted as follows:

Rollcall No. 221: No.
Rollcall No. 222: Yes.
Rollcall No. 223: No.
Rollcall No. 224: Yes.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker’s approval of the Journal, which the Chair will put de novo.

The question is on the Speaker’s approval of the Journal.

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

PERMISSION TO EXTEND DEBATE TIME ON H.R. 1191, PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that debate under clause 1(c) of rule XV on a motion to suspend the rules relating to H.R. 1191 be extended to 1 hour.

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

There was no objection.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2016

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. THORNBERRY. 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. 1735.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 255 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 1735.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. GRAVES) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1750

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 1735) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2016 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military per-

sonnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes, with Mr. GRAVES of Louisiana in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. THORNBERRY) and the gentleman from Washington (Mr. SMITH) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I am proud to bring to the floor H.R. 1735, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016. This measure was reported by the Armed Services Committee by a vote of 60 members voting for and two members voting against. Of the two members, there was one from each party.

This bill follows the bipartisan tradition of the committee working collaboratively with an integrated staff to support the men and women who serve and protect our Nation.

All members of the committee have contributed to this product, and I am very grateful for all of their efforts throughout the year. I am especially grateful to the efforts of the ranking member, Mr. SMITH, not only for his contributions and for his partnership in the committee but doing so at a time where he has been dealing with surgeries and a variety of things. But it has been a true pleasure and continues to be to work with him for the benefit of our Nation.

Mr. Chairman, this bill authorizes spending for the Department of Defense at a level that is consistent with the congressional budget resolution and a level that is consistent with the President’s budget request. So there have been differences, and there will continue to be some differences about how some of that spending gets categorized, but when you add it all up together, this authorization measure meets exactly what the President has asked for, which is essentially \$611.9 billion for national defense.

Included is a program-by-program authorization for all of that spending; whether it is in the overseas contingency account or the base budget, it is all authorized program by program.

This bill also contains some significant reforms, including acquisition reform, to improve the way the Department purchases goods and services. We have been working with the Pentagon and with industry to thin out regulations, simplify the process, and make it easier to hold industry and government personnel accountable for the results.

This bill has overhead reform to reduce the amount of money that we are spending on overhead and bureaucracy so that more resources can be devoted to the men and women on the front lines.

This measure has reform in the area of personnel pay and benefits. Of the 15 recommendations by the personnel commission, this measure does some-

thing in 11 of those 15 so that we can be in better shape to continue to recruit and retain the top quality people that our Nation needs for decades to come.

Now, some people say, Well, there is too much reform here. Some people say, Well, there is not enough reform here. There isn’t enough if enough means you solve all the problems. But there is a start at significant reform that helps make sure we get better value for the money we spend and also that the Department is more agile in meeting the national security challenges we face.

Mr. Chairman, this morning in reading the papers, I made some notes about the headlines just in one newspaper today, May 13, 2015. Some of those headlines are “Kerry Meets Putin,” “U.S. Weighs Plan to Confront China in the South China Sea,” and “Fresh Earthquake Rattles Nepal.”

By the way, Mr. Chairman, I know that the Marines and their families who were involved in the helicopter, which has not yet been found to my understanding, are certainly in our thoughts and prayers. Our military is called upon to do humanitarian efforts.

The CHAIR. The time of the gentleman from Texas has expired.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself an additional 1 minute.

“Somali Men Plead Guilty in Terror Plot,” “North Korea Executes Defense Chief,” and “Assad Still Has Chemical Arms.” The list goes on and on. This is the world that we face. This is the world we send our men and women out into to protect us and to defend our Nation. They deserve the best from us. They deserve something other than political games. They should not be used as pawns to make a point.

We should give them our best by doing our job under the Constitution, just as they give us their best in defending this country. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I think this bill, H.R. 1735, deserves the support of all Members in this House, and I hope they will do so.

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

Mr. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I want to congratulate the chairman—this is his first year as chairman—on his hard work on this bill, and there are a lot of very good things in this bill. I think most prominently is the reform the chairman mentioned, the compensation reform. We formed a commission to study how we do personnel compensation and the retirement system. In a very rare move, we actually followed some of the advice of that commission in this bill and made, I think, some very positive reforms to the personnel compensation system. There are a variety of other reforms the chairman has worked on that are important. There is also a whole slew of provisions in there that do, in fact, do an excellent job of providing for the men and women who defend our country. So there are a lot of very positive things about this bill.