

Those willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for their country deserve to know that we will support and care for their loved ones they leave behind. After talking with these families, I knew that we needed to do more for these grieving families and we needed to do more to recognize the sacrifice of their loved ones. That is why I introduced the House bill companion of the Gold Star Fathers Act.

Mr. Speaker, our country has long recognized that mothers who have lost a child in military service or are caring for their son or daughter who was permanently disabled in the military deserve a hand when seeking Federal employment. Currently, qualifying mothers of certain disabled or deceased veterans are eligible to receive the veterans hiring preference that will no longer be used by their loved one when applying for certain Federal service jobs.

However, mothers are not the only ones who grieve. The loss of a child is felt just as strongly by our veterans' fathers as by their mothers. It is time to ensure equal treatment of and respect for all parents of deceased or disabled veterans. That is why the Gold Star Fathers Act would extend this hiring preference to fathers as well.

In many cases, not only have the parents undergone significant trauma emotionally, but they have lost a working-age member of their family; and in the case of a permanently disabled child, they may have mounting medical bills to deal with as well. It is time to establish equality in our Nation's treatment of the parents of deceased and disabled veterans.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Senators WYDEN, COLLINS, and BROWN for their leadership on the Gold Star Fathers Act in the Senate, and I want to thank my former colleague Representative Tim Bishop for his past leadership on this issue as well.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all of my colleagues to join us in honoring our Gold Star families. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to vote in favor of this bipartisan, unanimously supported Gold Star Fathers Act.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I urge adoption of this commonsense bill. It is more than common sense. We talk about family values a lot. These are family values. These are highest family values of parents that have raised young people who are willing to step forward for our country without consideration of their own lives or their futures in most cases. So I applaud my colleagues' efforts on this behalf, and I support and ask that this bill be supported fully by this body.

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 Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 136.

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.

WOUNDED WARRIORS FEDERAL LEAVE ACT OF 2015

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 313) to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide leave to any new Federal employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more for purposes of undergoing medical treatment for such disability, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 313

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 "Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL LEAVE FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES WHO ARE DISABLED VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subchapter II of chapter 63 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

"§ 6329. Disabled veteran leave

"(a) During the 12-month period beginning on the first day of employment, any employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more is entitled to leave, without loss or reduction in pay, for purposes of undergoing medical treatment for such disability for which sick leave could regularly be used.

"(b)(1) The leave credited to an employee under subsection (a) may not exceed 104 hours.

"(2) Any leave credited to an employee pursuant to subsection (a) that is not used during the 12-month period described in such subsection may not be carried over and shall be forfeited.

"(c) In order to verify that leave credited to an employee pursuant to subsection (a) is used for treating a service-connected disability, such employee shall submit to the head of the employing agency certification, in such form and manner as the Director of the Office of Personnel Management may prescribe, that such employee used such leave for purposes of being furnished treatment for such disability by a health care provider.

"(d) In this section—

"(1) the term 'employee' has the meaning given such term in section 2105, and includes an officer or employee of the United States Postal Service or of the Postal Regulatory Commission;

"(2) the term 'service-connected' has the meaning given such term in section 101(16) of title 38; and

"(3) the term 'veteran' has the meaning given such term in section 101(2) of such title."

(b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for chapter 63 of title 5, United States Code, is amended by adding after the item relating to section 6328 the following:

"6329. Disabled veteran leave."

(c) APPLICATION.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to any employee (as that term is defined in section 6329(d)(1) of title 5, United States Code, as added by subsection (a)) hired on or after the date that is one year after the date of enactment of this Act.

(d) REGULATIONS.—Not later than 9 months after the date of enactment of this Act—

(1) the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall prescribe regulations with respect to the leave provided by the amendment in subsection (a) for employees, but not including employees of the United States Postal Service or the Postal Regulatory Commission; and

(2) the Postmaster General shall prescribe regulations for such leave with respect to officers and employees of the United States Postal Service and the Postal Regulatory Commission.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. WALBERG. 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 bill under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 313, the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015, sponsored by my colleague, Congressman STEPHEN LYNCH. This important piece of legislation supports wounded warriors newly hired in the Federal Government.

The Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015 supports our disabled veterans transitioning to civilian careers by providing sick leave for medical treatments and appointments that are related to their service-connected disability.

Mr. Speaker, this bipartisan legislation provides immediate access to sick leave for any new Federal employee who is a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more for the purposes of undergoing medical treatment for such disability.

Because Federal employees begin with a zero sick leave balance and accrue sick leave over time, disabled veterans beginning civilian jobs often have insufficient sick leave to attend medical appointments required for treatment of their service-connected disabilities. This bill provides our newly hired disabled veterans with immediate access of up to 13 days for sick leave so that our disabled veterans do not have to take unpaid leave to care for their service-connected injuries.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 313 is supported by a number of veterans and employee organizations, including the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Federal Managers Association.

I commend Mr. LYNCH for his leadership on this issue and for working with Mr. FARENTHOLD, Ranking Member CUMMINGS, Mr. CONNOLLY, and Ms. NOR-TON to bring this bipartisan legislation before the committee. I also want to acknowledge Senators TESTER, MORAN, and TOOMEY for their work on the Senate companion bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 313, the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act of 2015.

I introduced this bipartisan legislation in January of this year, and I am proud that it has now gained the support of over 30 Democratic and Republican Members of Congress.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG), for his remarks and his support of this bill. At the outset, I would also like to thank Chairman JASON CHAFFETZ and Ranking Member ELIJAH CUMMINGS along with the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FARENTHOLD) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee for their leadership in bringing H.R. 313 to the floor. I would also like to thank many of the veterans groups and Federal unions and workforce organizations that have joined together to endorse this legislation. They include the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, and the 31 unions and member organizations that make up the Federal Postal Coalition.

Let me also commend Jennifer Hemingway of the majority staff for the Oversight and Government Reform Committee and Lena Chang of the Democratic staff for our committee for their great work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act will address a problem faced by many wounded warriors who are transitioning to civilian life through new careers in the Federal workforce. Currently, a first-year Federal employee will begin his or her career with zero sick leave in the event of a medical event. That is because under current law, full-time Federal employees only earn 4 hours of paid sick leave for each pay period that they work.

Obviously, starting from the beginning, they will have zero balance in their sick leave bank—with a maximum of 104 hours of paid sick leave that is available per year. Nevertheless, new employees start with zero. While Federal workers are able to carry over unused annual sick leave from year to year, they begin their first year on the job with no sick leave whatsoever.

Now, this lack of initial leave for newly hired Federal workers is particularly burdensome on those employees who are also wounded warriors. These

employees need to make regular visits to the VA to seek medical treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and other service-connected disabilities, and they are quickly forced to burn up any sick leave that they do accrue during their first year at a Federal agency.

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Several wounded warriors who have transitioned to the Federal workforce following their tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan and other assignments have highlighted this difficulty during discussions with me and my staff.

These workers reported that, without sufficient leave during their first year on the job, they were routinely faced with the difficult choice between having to take a day off work without pay or simply skipping their scheduled VA appointments altogether. Some wounded warriors reported that the closest VA facility to their job was located a 2- or 3-hour drive away.

As additionally noted by the Federal Managers Association: “Young men and women struggle with available leave as they attempt to keep service-related, medically-necessary appointments, which puts undue stress on both managers and their Federal employees as they try to meet their Congressionally-mandated missions and goals.”

Mr. Speaker, we must afford our wounded warriors the flexibility to receive medical care as they transition to serving our Nation in a new capacity, through a Federal civilian job. The Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act would do just that.

This bill will provide first-year Federal employees who have a VA disability rating of 30 percent or greater with 104 hours of wounded warrior leave from the moment they begin their Federal workforce careers. This includes eligible new hires at our Nation’s largest employer of veterans—the Defense Department—as well as the United States Postal Service.

H.R. 313 also recognizes that these dedicated Federal workers will have accumulated up to 104 hours of traditional sick leave by the end of their first year on the job. That is why the bill also provides that any unused wounded warrior leave would not carry over beyond the second year.

The Wounded Warriors Federal Leave Act will also provide critical importance, given that the most recent Federal data on veterans employment indicates that Federal agencies are hiring a growing number of veterans each year. In fiscal year 2014, nearly 60,000, or 33.2 percent, of new hires at Federal agencies were veterans. That is an increase of 9.2 percent over fiscal year 2009.

With the number of our young people who have served multiple tours of duty—three, four, five tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan—this is especially important. Approximately 16,000 of newly Federal employees were wounded warriors with a disability rating of 30 percent or greater.

Again, I am thankful to Mr. CHAFFETZ, Mr. WALBERG, Mr. CUMMINGS, and Mr. CONNOLLY. And, also, I want to thank Mr. TESTER. When we sent this bill over to the Senate looking for a cosponsor in the Senate, Senator TESTER was quick to step up and take on this fight in the Senate. I want to thank him for his work on this bill in the Senate side.

In closing, I urge all our Members to vote in favor of H.R. 313.

I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I truly thank Congressman LYNCH for his leadership on this issue. It is an issue not only whose time has come, but probably should have come long before this. It is a great idea that deals with the reality of what we face in dealing with wounded warriors and their ongoing success that this country—a grateful country—ought to be involved with encouraging.

I urge the adoption of the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. WALBERG) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 313.

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.

FEDERAL VEHICLE REPAIR COST SAVINGS ACT OF 2015

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 565) to reduce the operation and maintenance costs associated with the Federal fleet by encouraging the use of remanufactured parts, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 565

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 Vehicle Repair Cost Savings Act of 2015”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that, in March 2013, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that confirmed that—

(1) there are approximately 588,000 vehicles in the civilian Federal fleet;

(2) Federal agencies spent approximately \$975,000,000 on repair and maintenance of the Federal fleet in 2011;

(3) remanufactured vehicle components, such as engines, starters, alternators, steering racks, and clutches, tend to be less expensive than comparable new replacement parts; and

(4) the United States Postal Service and the Department of the Interior both informed the Government Accountability Office that the respective agencies rely on the use of remanufactured vehicle components to reduce costs.

SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act—