

the Federal Government to advance the national unity of effort to strengthen critical infrastructure security and resilience; enable effective information exchange by identifying baseline data and systems requirements for the Federal Government; and implement an integration and analysis function to inform planning and operations decisions regarding critical infrastructure.

Effective security for our nation's critical infrastructure requires a national unity of effort based upon strategic guidance from the Secretary of Homeland Security.

I introduced H.R. 85, Terrorism Prevention and Critical Infrastructure Protection Act, which directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to work with critical infrastructure owners and operators and state, local, and territorial to take proactive steps to address All Hazards that would impact: national security; economic stability; public health and safety; and any combination of these.

The Jackson Lee bill, just as H.R. 1703 is intended to do, would reduce vulnerabilities associated with potential terrorist attacks that target critical infrastructure by supporting a coordinated partnership among federal agencies; critical infrastructure owners and operators and local, state, and tribal authorities.

Last, Friday's terrible attacks in Paris only illustrates the inhumanity of those who are America's enemies—the enemies of all of those who cherish freedom.

I join my colleagues in the House in offering my deepest sympathies to the people of Paris especially to the families of those killed.

Our commitment to our national security should and must extend to the security needs of our allies in the struggle against violence and terrorism—France.

I ask my colleagues to join me in voting for H.R. 1703.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1073, 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.

DIGNIFIED INTERMENT OF OUR VETERANS ACT OF 2015

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1338) to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on matters relating to the burial of unclaimed remains of veterans in national cemeteries, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1338

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 "Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS STUDY ON MATTERS RELATING TO BURIAL OF UNCLAIMED REMAINS OF VETERANS IN NATIONAL CEMETERIES.

(a) *STUDY AND REPORT REQUIRED.*—Not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(1) *complete a study on matters relating to the interring of unclaimed remains of veterans in national cemeteries under the control of the National Cemetery Administration; and*

(2) *submit to Congress a report on the findings of the Secretary with respect to the study required under paragraph (1).*

(b) *MATTERS STUDIED.*—The matters studied under subsection (a)(1) shall include the following:

(1) *Determining the scope of issues relating to unclaimed remains of veterans, including an estimate of the number of unclaimed remains of veterans.*

(2) *Assessing the effectiveness of the procedures of the Department of Veterans Affairs for working with persons or entities having custody of unclaimed remains to facilitate interment of unclaimed remains of veterans in national cemeteries under the control of the National Cemetery Administration.*

(3) *Assessing State and local laws that affect the ability of the Secretary to inter unclaimed remains of veterans in national cemeteries under the control of the National Cemetery Administration.*

(4) *Developing recommendations for such legislative or administrative action as the Secretary considers appropriate.*

(c) *METHODOLOGY.*—

(1) *NUMBER OF UNCLAIMED REMAINS.*—In estimating the number of unclaimed remains of veterans under subsection (b)(1), the Secretary may review such subset of applicable entities as the Secretary considers appropriate, including a subset of funeral homes and coroner offices that possess unclaimed veterans remains.

(2) *ASSESSMENT OF STATE AND LOCAL LAWS.*—In assessing State and local laws under subsection (b)(3), the Secretary may assess such sample of applicable State and local laws as the Secretary considers appropriate in lieu of reviewing all applicable State and local laws.

SEC. 3. LIMITATION ON AWARDS AND BONUSES PAID TO SENIOR EXECUTIVE EMPLOYEES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.

Section 705 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146; 38 U.S.C. 703 note) is amended by striking the period at the end and inserting the following: “, of which, during fiscal year 2016, not more than an aggregate amount of \$2,000,000 may be paid to employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs who are members of the Senior Executive Service.”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks or to add any extraneous material they may have on H.R. 1338, as amended.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I do urge all Members to support H.R. 1338, the Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act of 2015.

This very important bill, which was introduced by my good friend, Mr. SHUSTER of Pennsylvania, would help ensure that deceased veterans are treated with respect and with dignity.

H.R. 1338, as amended, would require that the Department of Veterans Affairs conduct a study on the serious problem of unclaimed remains of deceased veterans. VA will provide a dignified burial in national cemeteries for those who die with no family to claim their remains or who did not have enough money to cover burial expenses.

Unfortunately, the remains of deceased veterans may end up on the shelf at a funeral home or the shelf of a coroner's office, and VA may not be aware that the veteran's remains were not interred.

In 2013, Congress passed legislation in an attempt to ensure that all deceased veterans are treated with the honor that they had earned. The Dignified Burial and Other Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2012 directed VA to work with Veterans Service Organizations and assist States, cities, and funeral directors to identify the unclaimed remains of veterans and to arrange for their burials in one of our national cemeteries.

Unfortunately, the law has not resolved this issue and too many veterans may not be receiving a dignified burial. That is unconscionable. The men and women who have served our Nation in uniform have the right to expect that our Nation will make every effort to treat them with honor and deference even after they pass away.

This study would determine the scope of the problem and identify any obstacles associated with claiming or interring veteran remains.

Additionally, VA would also be required to make recommendations on how we can better ensure that our Nation's heroes are properly laid to rest.

I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1700

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of my friend Mr. SHUSTER's Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act. This legislation will require the Department of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on the unclaimed remains of veterans.

Our Nation continues to be challenged by local and privately owned cemeteries that fail to identify and provide the VA with uninterred veterans' remains. It is our intent that the VA look into this issue and come up with some solutions to assist privately and locally owned cemetery homes with the information and the support they need to transfer those remains to the VA's National Cemetery Administration.

Our Nation's veterans have earned a proper and honorable burial for their

service. This legislation will help the VA to help our veterans. I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

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

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Everett, Pennsylvania (Mr. SHUSTER), the original sponsor of this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. SHUSTER. I thank the chairman for working with me on this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to shed light on the issue plaguing our Nation's veterans. Specifically, there are an estimated 47,000 cremated veterans' remains that are waiting to be interred because it was not possible to identify the next of kin.

Existing legislation directs the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Service Organizations, and funeral directors to work together in the claiming and interring of deceased veterans. Unfortunately, numerous barriers prevent the effective collaboration among these stakeholders. As it stands today, these barriers are not fully understood, which is preventing an effective solution to the problem from being found.

For instance, the Missing in America Project, a nonprofit service organization that was established to locate and bury unclaimed veterans' remains, identified 100 veterans who were awaiting burial within the State of Pennsylvania over the last couple of years. Some of those veterans waited more than 20 years for a dignified, military burial. We can speculate regarding the reason for this disgrace, but we cannot know for sure without giving this issue the attention it deserves.

That is why I have introduced H.R. 1338, the Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act of 2015. My bill requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to conduct a study on matters relating to the claiming and interring of unclaimed veterans' remains. The intent of the study is to confirm the scope of this problem, to uncover any barriers associated with claiming and interring veterans' remains, and to solicit recommendations from the Department of Veterans Affairs on potential solutions.

I would like to thank two of my constituents, Mr. Ron Metros and Mr. Lanny Golden, for working with me on this legislation.

When asked why he is so passionate about this issue, Mr. Golden, a Vietnam veteran, simply replied that his brothers in arms deserve to be buried alongside those who have walked the same path.

I fully agree with Mr. Golden, and I would like to say "thank you" to all of those who have served this great Nation.

I would also like to take this time to thank my colleagues Chairman MILLER and Ranking Member BROWN for working with me. Of course, I thank the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the 98 bipartisan cosponsors of the House for their support.

Also a special thanks to two people without whom I could not have done this. They are my military fellows. One is U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Anna Lloyd. She helped start the process. We then finished up with Air Force Major Cheri Guikema. Both of them provided an invaluable service in putting this bill forward, and I can't thank them enough for their help and also for their continued service to the United States military.

Now, more than ever, we need to stand together and show our veterans we care. None of our heroes should be forgotten, and this is a step forward in reaching that important goal.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time. I urge my colleagues to support the passing of H.R. 1338, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time. The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair will note that the time previously controlled by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) will now be controlled by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO).

There was no objection.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE).

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this legislation, the Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act of 2015.

In May of last year, reports emerged that the bodies of 52 veterans had remained unburied for over a year at the Los Angeles County Mortuary, located just outside of my district. Similar instances were discovered in 13 other States, demonstrating just how widespread this is. Stories of unburied veterans' bodies are deeply unsettling and the result of gaps in burial procedure policies at the VA. It has to be addressed. Our service men and women have made immense personal sacrifices on behalf of our Nation, and it is unacceptable for their remains to be treated with such a blatant lack of respect and dignity.

Like the gentleman from Pennsylvania and many of my colleagues in the House and Senate, I introduced legislation in an effort to solve this issue. The Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to study the burial of veterans' unclaimed remains in national cemeteries and to report the findings of such studies to Congress. This legislation is an important step toward acknowledging and, ultimately, solving the problem.

Last week, the Senate passed by unanimous consent the 21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act, which incorporated the House legislation, and I am happy to see that the companion legislation is now being voted on in the House of Representatives, bringing it one step closer to the President's signature.

We made a commitment to take care of our veterans in both life and death, and it is crucial that we follow through

on it. I encourage my colleagues in the House of Representatives to vote in support of the Dignified Interment of Our Veterans Act.

I thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for his work on this issue and the gentleman from Florida for his continued efforts as the House Veterans' Affairs Committee chairman.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 1338, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1338, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. 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.

HONOR AMERICA'S GUARD-RESERVE RETIREES ACT

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1384) to amend title 38, United States Code, to recognize the service in the reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as veterans under law.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1384

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 "Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act".

SEC. 2. PROVISION OF STATUS UNDER LAW BY HONORING CERTAIN MEMBERS OF THE RESERVE COMPONENTS AS VETERANS.

(a) VETERAN STATUS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 1 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 107 the following new section:

“§ 107A. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components

“Any person who is entitled under chapter 1223 of title 10 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 section.”

(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 107 the following new item:

“107A. Honoring as veterans certain persons who performed service in the reserve components.”

(b) CLARIFICATION REGARDING BENEFITS.—No person may receive any benefit under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs solely by reason of section 107A