

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to dispense with the reading.

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

There was no objection.

The amendment to the preamble was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

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.

TREATMENT OF CERTAIN PAYMENTS IN EUGENICS COMPENSATION ACT

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1698) to exclude payments from State eugenics compensation programs from consideration in determining eligibility for, or the amount of, Federal public benefits.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1698

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 "Treatment of Certain Payments in Eugenics Compensation Act".

SEC. 2. EXCLUSION OF PAYMENTS FROM STATE EUGENICS COMPENSATION PROGRAMS FROM CONSIDERATION IN DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY FOR, OR THE AMOUNT OF, FEDERAL PUBLIC BENEFITS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, payments made under a State eugenics compensation program shall not be considered as income or resources in determining eligibility for, or the amount of, any Federal public benefit.

(b) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this section:

(1) FEDERAL PUBLIC BENEFIT.—The term "Federal public benefit" means—

(A) any grant, contract, loan, professional license, or commercial license provided by an agency of the United States or by appropriated funds of the United States; and

(B) any retirement, welfare, health, disability, public or assisted housing, postsecondary education, food assistance, unemployment benefit, or any other similar benefit for which payments or assistance are provided to an individual, household, or family eligibility unit by an agency of the United States or by appropriated funds of the United States.

(2) STATE EUGENICS COMPENSATION PROGRAM.—The term "State eugenics compensation program" means a program established by State law that is intended to compensate individuals who were sterilized under the authority of the State.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) and the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members 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 North Carolina?

There was no objection.

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

I rise today in support of S. 1698, the Treatment of Certain Payments in Eugenics Compensation Act, introduced by my friend and colleague, Senator THOM TILLIS of North Carolina. Senator BURR and Senator TILLIS have been very active in getting this bill passed through the United States Senate.

Mr. Speaker, S. 1698 is a bipartisan bill that will help victims of State government eugenics campaigns by excluding one-time, eugenics-related, compensation payments from consideration when calculating Federal benefits. In essence, this would ensure that the victims of State-based and State-mandated eugenics programs in the early part of the 20th century—which over 30 States actually had—are not further victimized by being kicked off the social safety net, which many of these victims who are still alive depend on.

Many of these victims are still alive today, as I mentioned. In North Carolina, at least, 220 out of the reported 7,600 victims were still living as of September of last year.

My home State has worked to make amends for those that the State victimized. Our State legislators, now led by Senator TILLIS passed—and the Governor signed—legislation that provided large, one-time compensation payments to victims of eugenics programs that are still alive and still in our society today.

In North Carolina, victims can receive payments from the State government ranging from \$20- to \$45,000. Our State is not alone. Virginia has a similar program, awarding \$25,000 in compensation to each victim of the State's eugenics programs.

These one-time compensation payments count as normal gross income under current Federal law and could have the unintended effect of increasing some of the victim's reported income, thereby costing them access to some Federal income-based benefits.

Mr. Speaker, such an outcome is unfair. These individuals have suffered great pain at the hands of their State government and must not be further victimized by losing the important benefits they are receiving today.

The takeaway is that this was a State-created problem and the State owed them compensation, and we should ensure that these individuals are able to get the benefits they need and deserve.

Mr. Speaker, this is important legislation that is bipartisan. I am happy to have the support of my colleague, Representative BUTTERFIELD, a Democrat from North Carolina, representing eastern North Carolina as a cosponsor of this important bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of S. 1698, the Treatment of Certain Payments in Eugenics Compensation Act.

In the early 20th century, over 30 States enacted eugenics and compulsory sterilization laws, resulting in the involuntary sterilization of over 60,000 Americans. These horrendous and discriminatory laws targeted low-income individuals, particularly single mothers, African Americans, children from large families, and people with disabilities.

Recently, two States with the most aggressive eugenics programs, Virginia and North Carolina, passed State legislation to provide compensation to the living victims of these programs. In 2013, North Carolina set aside \$10 million for compensation payments; and, as of January 2015, the State had awarded approximately \$20,000 to each of the 220 victims. Last year, Virginia passed a bill awarding \$25,000 to each of its surviving eugenics victims.

While these payments are intended to compensate individuals for past wrongs, they may also have the unintended effect of causing victims to lose eligibility for Federal benefits determined by income thresholds. Under current law, victims who receive eugenics compensation could be denied Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance, unemployment, or disability benefits should the payments raise their incomes above program eligibility levels.

Most eugenics victims were poor and disadvantaged in the early 20th century, and many remain so today. As such, they rely on these important Federal benefits programs to make ends meet.

□ 1500

S. 1698 would ensure that State eugenics payments are treated like other medical compensation payments and not included in eligibility determination for Federal benefits. This would guarantee that eugenics victims receive all benefits they rightfully deserve.

We cannot undo the mistakes of the past, but we can do everything in our power to ensure that eugenics victims are not subjected to unfair treatment yet again. I urge my colleagues to support S. 1698.